

Ensign



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Joseph Receiving the Plates from Angel Moroni, by Tom Holdman

“On the twenty-second day of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, . . . the . . . heavenly messenger delivered them up to me with this charge: that I should be responsible for them; . . . that if I would use all my endeavors to preserve them, until he, the messenger, should call for them, they should be protected” (Joseph Smith—History 1:59).

Ensign



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In Opposition to Evil

BY PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY

One evening I picked up the morning paper, which I had not previously read, and thumbed through its pages. My eyes stopped on the theater ads, so many of them an open appeal to witness that which is debauching, that which leads to violence and illicit sex.

I turned to my mail and found a small magazine which lists the television fare for the coming week and saw titles of shows aimed in the same direction. A news magazine lay on my desk. This particular issue was devoted to the rising crime rate. Articles in the magazine spoke of additional billions for increased police forces and larger prisons.

The flood of pornographic filth, the inordinate emphasis on sex and violence are not peculiar to North America. The situation is as bad in Europe and in many other areas. The whole dismal picture indicates a weakening rot seeping into the very fiber of society.

Legal restraints against deviant moral behavior are eroding under legislative enactments and court opinions. This is done in the name of freedom of speech, freedom of the

press, freedom of choice in so-called personal matters. But the bitter fruit of these so-called freedoms has been enslavement to debauching habits and behavior that leads only to destruction. A prophet, speaking long ago, aptly described the process when he said, "And thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell" (2 Nephi 28:21).

On the other hand, I am satisfied that there are millions upon millions of good people in this and in other lands. For the most part, husbands are faithful to wives, and wives to husbands. Their children are being reared in sobriety, industry, and faith in God. Given the strength of these, I am one who believes that the situation is far from hopeless. I am satisfied that there is no need to stand still and let the filth and violence overwhelm us or to run in despair. The tide, high and menacing as it is, can be turned back if enough of the kind I have mentioned will add their strength to the strength of the few who are now effectively working. I believe the challenge to oppose this evil is one from which



Let our voices be heard. I hope they will not be shrill voices, but I hope we shall speak with such conviction that those to whom we speak shall know of the strength of our feeling and the sincerity of our effort.

members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as citizens, cannot shrink.

I should like to suggest four points of beginning in our efforts to oppose the tide of evil.

The first: Begin with yourself. Reformation of the world begins with reformation of self. It is a fundamental article of our faith that “we believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, [and] virtuous” (Articles of Faith 1:13).

We cannot hope to influence others in the direction of virtue unless we live lives of virtue. The example of our living will carry a greater influence than will all the preaching in which we might indulge. We cannot expect to lift others unless we stand on higher ground ourselves.

Respect for self is the beginning of virtue in men. That man who knows that he is a child of God, created in the image of a divine Father and gifted with a potential for the exercise of great and godlike virtues, will discipline himself against the sordid, lascivious elements to which all are exposed. Said Alma to his son Helaman, “Look to God and live” (Alma 37:47).

It is a matter of more than passing interest that the Lord, as He spoke to the multitude on the mount, included this marvelous declaration: “Blessed

are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

A wise man once said, “Make of yourself an honest man, and there will be one rascal fewer in the world.”

And it was Shakespeare who put into the mouth of one of his characters this persuasive injunction: “To thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man.”¹

I should like to give to all men and women who may read these words a challenge to lift their thoughts above the filth, to discipline their acts into examples of virtue, to control their words so that they speak only that which is uplifting and leads to growth.

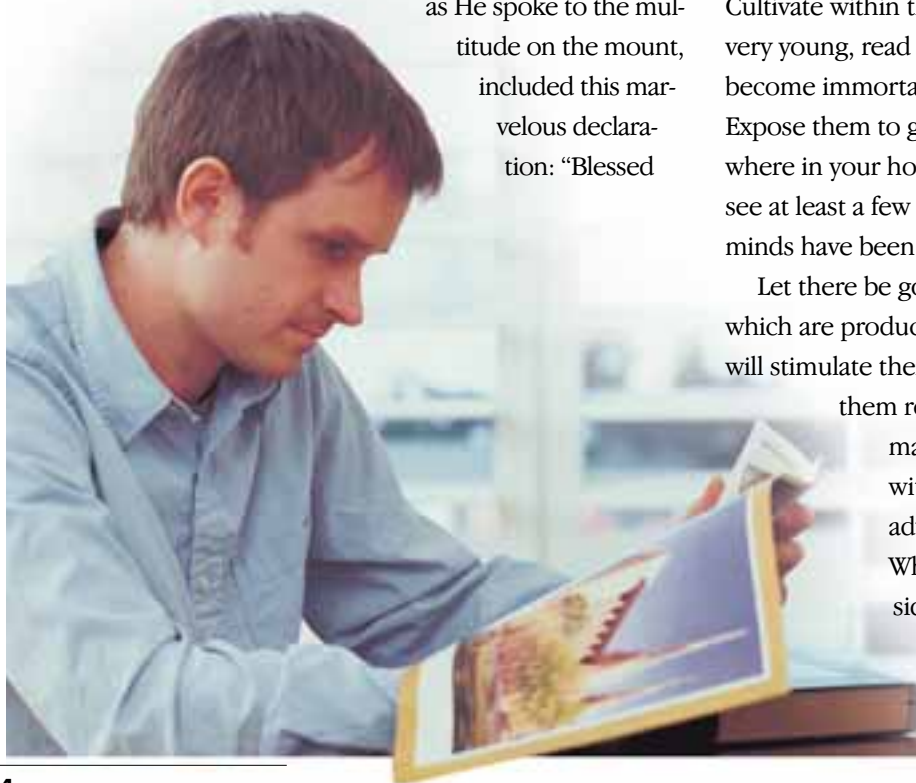
And now my second point of beginning: A better tomorrow begins with the training of a better generation.

This places upon parents the responsibility to do a more effective work in the rearing of children. The home is the cradle of virtue, the place where character is formed and habits are established. Family home evening is the opportunity to teach the ways of the Lord.

You know that your children will read. They will read books, and they will read magazines and newspapers. Cultivate within them a taste for the best. While they are very young, read to them the great stories which have become immortal because of the virtues they teach. Expose them to good books. Let there be a corner somewhere in your house, be it ever so small, where they will see at least a few books of the kind upon which great minds have been nourished.

Let there be good magazines about the house, those which are produced by the Church and by others, which will stimulate their thoughts to ennobling concepts. Let

them read a good family newspaper that they may know what is going on in the world without being exposed to the debasing advertising and writing so widely found. When there is a good movie in town, consider going to the theater as a family. Your very patronage will give encouragement to those who wish to produce this type of entertainment. And use





who believes that we should earnestly and sincerely and positively express our convictions to those given the heavy responsibility of making and enforcing our laws. The sad fact is that the minority who call for greater liberalization, who peddle and devour pornography, who encourage and feed on licentious display

that most remarkable of all tools of communication, television, to enrich their lives. There is so much that is good, but it requires selectivity. Let those who are responsible for any efforts to put suitable family entertainment on television know of your appreciation for that which is good and also of your displeasure with that which is bad. In large measure, we get what we ask for. The problem is that so many of us fail to ask and, more frequently, fail to express gratitude for that which is good.

Let there be music in the home. If you have teenagers who have their own recordings, you will be prone to describe the sound as something other than music. Let them hear something better occasionally. Expose them to it. It will speak for itself. More appreciation will come than you may think. It may not be spoken, but it will be felt, and its influence will become increasingly manifest as the years pass.

Now my third point of beginning: The building of public sentiment begins with a few earnest voices. I am not one to advocate shouting defiantly or shaking fists and issuing threats in the faces of legislators. But I am one

make their voices heard until those in our legislatures may come to believe that what they say represents the will of the majority. We are not likely to get that which we do not speak up for.

Let our voices be heard. I hope they will not be shrill voices, but I hope we shall speak with such conviction that those to whom we speak shall know of the strength of our feeling and the sincerity of our effort. Remarkable consequences often flow from a well-written letter and a postage stamp. Remarkable results come of quiet conversation with those who carry heavy responsibilities.

Declared the Lord to this people:

“Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.

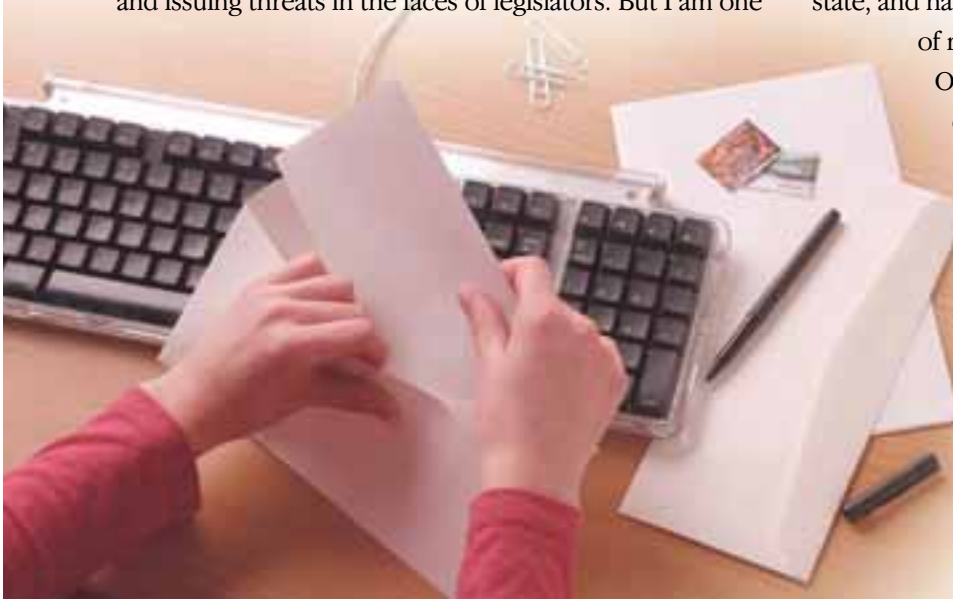
“Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind” (D&C 64:33–34).

This is the essence of the matter—“the heart and a willing mind.” Speak to those who enact the regulations, the statutes, and the laws—those in government on local, state, and national levels and those who occupy positions of responsibility as administrators of our schools.

Of course, there will be some who will slam the door, some who will scoff. Discouragement may come. It has always been thus.

Edmund Burke, speaking on the floor of the House of Commons in 1783, declared concerning the advocate of an unpopular cause:

“He well knows what snares are spread about his path. . . . He is traduced and abused for his supposed motives.



He will remember that obloquy is a necessary ingredient in the composition of all true glory: he will remember . . . that calumny and abuse are essential parts of triumph.”²

The Apostle Paul, in his defense before Agrippa, gave an account of his miraculous conversion while on the way to Damascus, declaring that the voice of the Lord commanded him to “rise, and stand upon thy feet” (Acts 26:16).

I think the Lord would say to us, “Rise, and stand upon thy feet, and speak up for truth and goodness and decency and virtue.”

Finally, my fourth point of beginning: Strength to do battle begins with enlisting the strength of God. He is the source of all true power.

Declared Paul to the Ephesians:

IDEAS FOR HOME TEACHERS

After you prayerfully prepare, share this message using a method that encourages the participation of those you teach. A few examples follow:

1. Ask family members if any of them have ever spoken out for good entertainment in the community. Have they discussed the subject with friends and associates? Ask them to brainstorm what they might do to support entertainment that is uplifting.

2. Read the quotation from *Hamlet* shared by President Hinckley, “To thine own self be true . . .,” and then the latter part of D&C 121:45, beginning with “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly.” Ask family members how we are being true to ourselves when we maintain virtuous thoughts and what the scripture means for us as individuals when it says, “Then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God.”

3. Read the quotation from Edmund Burke. Talk about the costs of courage; emphasize the benefits of speaking out for a righteous cause.

4. Ask family members to suggest some ways they as individuals can heed President Hinckley’s call to begin now in the fight against evil in society.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:10–13).

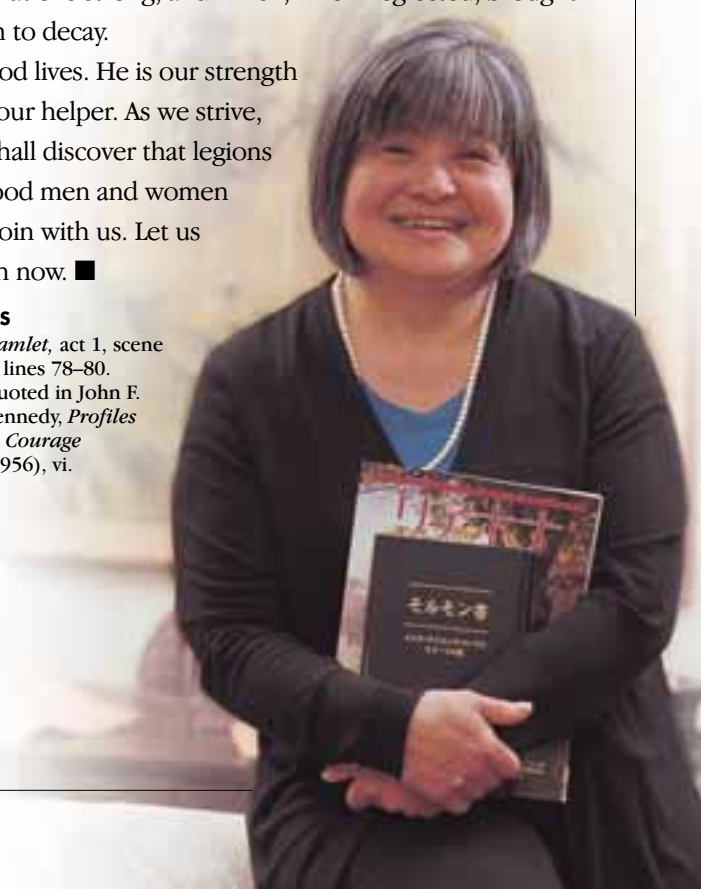
The tide of evil flows. Today it has become a veritable flood. Most of us, living somewhat sheltered lives, have little idea of the vast dimensions of it. Billions of dollars are involved for those who pour out pornography, for those who peddle lasciviousness, for those who deal in perversion, in sex and violence. God give us the strength, the wisdom, the faith, the courage as citizens to stand in opposition to these and to let our voices be heard in defense of those virtues which, when practiced in the past, made men and nations strong, and which, when neglected, brought them to decay.

God lives. He is our strength and our helper. As we strive, we shall discover that legions of good men and women will join with us. Let us begin now. ■

NOTES

1. *Hamlet*, act 1, scene 3, lines 78–80.

2. Quoted in John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage* (1956), vi.



LIGHT

AND

GROW WITH

BY ELDER LYNN A. MICKELSEN
Of the Seventy

A few years ago I was impressed by an advertisement for a fiber-optic glass products company with the caption “Light is the controlling force.” The illustration showed a corn seed with a small leaf extending above the surface of the ground and an extensive “fiber optic” root system below the ground, filled with the light of the sun.

I have a background in farming, so the ad naturally led me to ponder the role of light in a plant’s development. When the shoot of a plant breaks through the surface of the soil, it begins to conduct sunlight all the way down to the tips of the plant’s roots. This light tells a plant how high to grow, how many leaves to sprout, when to flower, when to set fruit, and when to age—a process called photomorphogenesis (not the same



*If we follow the Lord,
we will receive the
blessings of eternal
light and life that
only He can give.*

as the better-known photosynthesis). Without light, the plant dies. Fiber optics, which serve as the transmission lines of modern telephone communication and many other important technological applications, were patterned after this process.

As I thought about this process, I was impressed with the parallel between the role of light in a plant’s life and in our own lives. Plants always grow toward the light. A sunflower follows the sun across the sky every day until it becomes “stiff-necked”; then it withers and dies. When a potato seed sprouts and begins to grow, a clean white stem grows upward through the earth toward the light. A fungal disease called rhizoctonia may attack the tender stem. If allowed to progress, the fungus destroys the stem so that the light cannot reach the root system. Yet if the stem



can reach the surface of the earth and form leaves, the light can reach the root system, and the potato plant becomes strong enough to overcome the fungal enemy.

In our spiritual lives, our growth is determined by how we follow the Son—the Son of God—and allow His light to be the controlling force. If we become stiff-necked and cease to look to His light, or if we allow sin to damage our receptors for light, we will die spiritually. But if we obey the commandments, we come closer to God and gain greater light. This increase in light stimulates the “photomorphogenesis” of our spiritual lives and governs our spiritual progress.

What are some of the things we must do to receive of this eternal, life-giving light?

We must have faith in the Lord. The prophet Alma compares the word of God to a seed and challenges us to begin with a desire to believe; then, when the seed begins to sprout in our hearts, our understanding will be enlightened and our faith will grow (see Alma 32:27–30). Faith opens the windows of our hearts to the light of Christ and chases darkness from us. As our faith increases, we grow toward the light, and our capacity to receive that light is magnified (see D&C 50:24).

We must pray. The Lord’s instructions are explicit: we must ask, seek, and knock to receive the promises He has made to us (see Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9; 3 Nephi 14:7; D&C 88:63). Any great outpouring of light has always been given in answer to prayer. The Nephites experienced this when the Savior visited them: “And it came to pass that Jesus blessed them as they did pray unto him; and his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did

Plants always follow the light, which governs their growth. Similarly, as we follow the light, we progress spiritually.



shine upon them, and behold they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus; and behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof” (3 Nephi 19:25). Daily prayer keeps our eye single to His glory and facing toward the light.

We must repent of our sins. Nephi and his brother Lehi were cast into prison by the enemies of the Church because of their great success in preaching to the Lamanites. After many days their captors came into the prison to slay them, but they were protected as they were encircled about by a pillar of fire and their captors were covered by a cloud of darkness.

The earth trembled, but the captors could not flee because of the cloud and because of their fear.

The voice of the Lord came to the people through the cloud and commanded them three times to repent. The people asked, “What shall we do, that this cloud of darkness may be removed from overshadowing us?” A man among them named Aminadab, who had once belonged to the Church, told them they must repent and cry unto God. As they did so, the darkness dispersed, the captors were encircled about with a pillar of fire, and the Holy Spirit entered their hearts; they were filled with light as they were baptized by fire (see Helaman 5:14–49; 3 Nephi 9:20).

Sin limits light. As we follow the counsel of the Lord and repent of our sins, we open the way for this same infusion of light and baptism by fire.

We must covenant to follow the Son by baptism. Nephi declared, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow



the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 31:13). The covenant of baptism by water is a prerequisite to receiving the light that accompanies the gift of the Holy Ghost. Each week we

may renew this sacred covenant as we partake of the sacrament, thereby increasing our access to the Savior’s light.

We must look to our patriarchal blessings. Our patriarchal blessings can be a significant source of light. I shall be forever grateful for a patriarchal blessing that promised me “flashes from the eternal storehouse of truth,” for indeed that promise has been repeatedly fulfilled. We must seek the light that the Lord has personally promised each of us and live up to the heritage to which we have been called. The Apostle Peter taught, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

We must follow the prophet. When we sustained President Gordon B. Hinckley in April 1995, he reiterated the teachings of those who had gone before with a challenge to pray; read the scriptures; partake of the sacrament every week; go to the temple; be more kind, patient, and loving; and be loyal to the Lord and to each



If we will allow the light of the Savior to be the controlling force in our lives, the light within us will grow “brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24).

other. He taught us to love one another and to share the blessings of the gospel. His clarion call was: “The time has come for us to stand a little taller. . . . This is a season to be strong. It is a time to move forward without hesitation. . . . [It is a time] to become more Christlike. . . .

“Unitedly, working hand in hand, we shall move forward as servants of the living God, doing the work of His Beloved Son, our Master, whom we serve and whose name we seek to glorify.”¹

As we follow the prophet, we can enjoy blessings similar to that which the children of Israel were given: “And the Lord went before them . . . to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light” (Exodus 13:21). The prophet reflects the light of the Lord, which can guide us as we travel along our mortal journey.

May we all prepare that our eyes, hearts, and minds may serve as conduits for celestial light. I promise you that as we expose our lives to greater light, we will continue to grow spiritually, and the light within us will grow “brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24). I am grateful for the light of the Restoration, which has made possible the fulness of God’s blessings for His children. Jesus is the Christ, the Light and Life of the World. He lives; I know He lives, and if we follow Him, we will receive the blessings of eternal light and life that only He can give. ■

NOTE

1. “This Is the Work of the Master,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 71.

Elder Neal Ash Maxwell

A Promise Fulfilled

6 JULY 1926–21 JULY 2004



As a soldier under heavy enemy fire in World War II, young Neal Maxwell promised that if the Lord would preserve his life, he would dedicate that life to the Lord's service.

The Lord spared his life.

Young Neal kept his promise.

Almost 60 years later, on 21 July 2004, the Lord released Elder Neal Ash Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles from his mortal service after an eight-year battle with leukemia. He was 78.

A Lifetime of Service

"The death of this wonderful leader brings to a close a chapter in Church history spanning over 30 years of faithful leadership," said President Gordon B. Hinckley. "Elder Maxwell's lifetime of service to the Church and his country reached across borders into the hearts and homes of people throughout the entire world."

Elder Maxwell died on the 23rd anniversary of his 1981 call as an Apostle. Prior to that call he served two years as an Assistant to the Twelve and five years in the Presidency of the Seventy. Elder Maxwell also served as a bishop,

Commissioner of Church Education, a member of the Young Men general board, and as a regional representative.

"As long as our hearts pump," Elder Maxwell said, "some of the time they should pulsate because we're reaching out to others. And as long as there is breath in our lungs, some of that breath should be used to bestow on others deserved commendation and needed encouragement" (quoted in "Research Foundation Honors Elder Maxwell," *Ensign*, Aug. 2002, 77).

Service in Seeming Obscurity

At his funeral, held on 27 July in the Tabernacle on Temple Square, Elder Maxwell was also remembered for his service to his wife, Colleen; 4 children; 24 grandchildren; and 2 great-grandchildren. He was the son of Clarence H. and Emma Ash Maxwell.

"In a world filled with much laboring and striving in parliaments, congresses, agencies, and corporate offices," Elder Maxwell taught, "God's extraordinary work is most often done by ordinary people in the seeming obscurity of a home and family" (*That My Family Should Partake* [1974], 122).



Opposite page (from left): As an infantry soldier in World War II, 1944. Displaying numerous ribbons earned while raising pigs. As a missionary to eastern Canada, 1947–48. Above: Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Maxwell saw himself as one of those ordinary people striving to do an extraordinary work. He focused on his family. “We knew my father had a heavy commitment to his ministry,” his son, Cory, said in a funeral address. “But we also knew he not only loved us, he loved to spend time with us.”

Elder Maxwell often expressed deep admiration for his wife of almost 54 years and her “spiritual instincts.” He

called her a “more complete” Christian than he, referring to her high desire to serve and low need for recognition.

A Career in Public Service

With bachelor’s and master’s degrees in political science, Elder Maxwell spent the beginning of his career in politics. He worked in Washington, D.C., as a legislative assistant and later taught political science at the University of Utah. At one time he was encouraged to run for political office.

But Elder Maxwell’s early experiences taught him “that the living of one protective principle of the gospel is better than a thousand compensatory governmental programs—which programs are, so often, like ‘straightening deck chairs on the Titanic’” (“Why Not Now?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 12).

As an educator, Elder Maxwell won a place as a student favorite at the University of Utah. He became an assistant to the president, dean of students, and finally executive vice president.

In his final conference address he warned: “Do not expect the world’s solutions to the world’s problems to be very

effective. . . . Only the gospel is constantly relevant, and the substitute things won’t work” (“Remember How Merciful the Lord Hath Been,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2004, 45).

A Way with Words

Elder Maxwell will be remembered in part for his ability to eloquently express himself. He discovered early his talent for turning a phrase, and during his 78 years he wrote some 30 books and countless talks. Under inspiration he achieved a mastery of words that has moved millions.

“When he opened his mouth, we all listened,” said President Hinckley in a funeral tribute. “His genius was a product of diligence. He was a perfectionist, determined



Above: Organizing games with some of his grandchildren. Right: Making a presentation at a University of Utah board of regents meeting. Far right top: With his wife, Colleen Hinckley Maxwell. Far right bottom: Speaking at April 1997 general conference and expressing gratitude for the treatments that, while causing his hair loss, had allowed him to come “thus far.”



to extract from each phrase and sentence every drop of nourishment that could be produced. Each talk was a masterpiece, each book a work of art worthy of repeated reading. I think we shall not see one like him again.”

Elder Maxwell cultivated his ability to express important ideas in insightful ways, but he taught that it is the Spirit who communicates truth to those who hear. “The Spirit,” he said, “can help those to whom you testify to likewise catch hold of your words in a way that their minds and hearts will grasp them” (“Testifying of the Great and Glorious Atonement,” *Liabona*, Apr. 2002, 12; *Ensign*, Oct. 2001, 15).

A Living Sermon

Elder Maxwell’s teaching did not begin or end with words. “Deeds,” he taught, “not words—and becoming, not describing—are dominant in true discipleship” (“Becoming a Disciple,” *Ensign*, June 1996, 14).

His most eloquent sermon was the manner in which he lived. His was a sincere effort to become a true disciple of the Savior,



regardless of the challenges faced. He believed that “the only real *revelation* of Jesus is *emulation* of Him. Indeed, striving to become like Him is

a special way of bearing and sharing our testimony of Him” (*Even As I Am* [1982], 2).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said that an example of living testimony was found in Elder Maxwell’s life: “His courage, his submissive attitude in accepting his affliction with cancer, and his stalwart continued service have ministered comfort to thousands and taught eternal principles to millions. His example shows that the Lord will not only consecrate our afflictions for our gain, but He will use them to bless the lives of countless others” (“Give Thanks in All Things,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2003, 98).

Elder Maxwell loved the Lord and knew of His love for us, explaining “we may turn from him, but he is still there. We may feel that he is hidden from us because of the cloud cover of our concerns, but he is still close to us. We—not he—let something come between us, but no lasting eclipse need ensue. . . . Our disregard of him is no match for his love of us. Yes, Jesus of Nazareth lived! He lives now! He guides his Church!” (“All Hell Is Moved,” in *1977 Devotional Speeches of the Year* [1978], 181).

Another Kind of Battle

Elder Maxwell was first diagnosed with leukemia in 1996. Through aggressive but debilitating treatments, he was in and out of remission during the next eight years.

A few years before his initial diagnosis, Elder Maxwell taught that although we are happier when we keep the commandments, it is also true that “faithfulness will bring special challenges. It seems God is always stretching those who meekly serve Him.” But like Abraham, Peter, Amulek, and Jesus, each of us can overcome challenges to “become a distinguished alumnus of life’s school of affliction, graduating with honors” (quoted in “Priesthood Brethren Asked to Be Christ’s Servants,” *Ensign*, July 1993, 75).

Through his untiring ministry in the face of adversity, Elder Maxwell has indeed graduated with honors, and the tears at his passing were—as he said of other passings—“not of despair but . . . of appreciation and anticipation” because “for disciples, the closing of a grave is but the closing of a door which later will be flung open with rejoicing” (“All Hell Is Moved,” 181).

A Promise Fulfilled

In his final general conference address in April 2004, Elder Maxwell observed that “the Lord knows how many miles we have to go ‘before [we] sleep’” (*Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2004, 45).

Keeping the promise he made long ago in a foxhole on a faraway hill required many miles of Elder Maxwell, but each mile was numbered by the God he served until the day his mortal service was complete. ■

BELOVED COLLEAGUE HONORED BY HIS BRETHREN



At his funeral, speakers offered the following tributes to Elder Neal A. Maxwell:

President Gordon B. Hinckley: “He has accomplished more in these past eight years [of his illness] than most men do in a lifetime. . . . He comforted, blessed, and encouraged his fellow sufferers. Their oppressive burdens were made lighter by this good Samaritan who bound up their wounds and brought the sunlight of hope into their lives. . . . Like the Master whom he loved, he ‘went about doing good’ ” (Acts 10:38).

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency: “His service to the Lord’s work has been exemplary and without flaw. If I were asked to summarize Neal’s vast influence for good at home and abroad, I would choose the line: . . . ‘I served.’ Neal Maxwell served his country, his Church, his family, his fellowmen, his God.”

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency: “He was a great Apostle, an extraordinary human being, an exemplary son, husband, brother, father, and grandfather. He had a great mind to teach. He lived a great life to emulate and had great heart. . . . The glory of God was manifested in him and in his accomplishments.”

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “He endured with perfect patience the challenge of his last days. . . . Both Neal and Colleen . . . know for certain that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, that He accomplished the Atonement, the Resurrection of all mankind.”

We Must Raise Our Sights



As parents, teachers, leaders, and friends, our goal must be for youth to become truly converted to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

BY ELDER HENRY B. EYRING
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The world in which young people live is changing rapidly. When their older brothers and sisters return to visit the same schools and campuses they attended, they find a radically different moral climate. The language in the hallways and the locker rooms has coarsened. Clothing is less modest. Pornography has moved into the open. Not only has tolerance for wickedness increased, but much of what was called wrong is no longer condemned at all and may, even by our Latter-day Saint youth, be admired. Parents and leaders have in many cases bent to the pressures coming from a shifting world to retreat from moral standards once widely accepted.

The spiritual strength sufficient for our youth to stand firm just a few years ago will soon not be enough. Many of them are remarkable in their spiritual maturity and in their faith. But even the best of them are sorely tested. And the testing will become more severe.

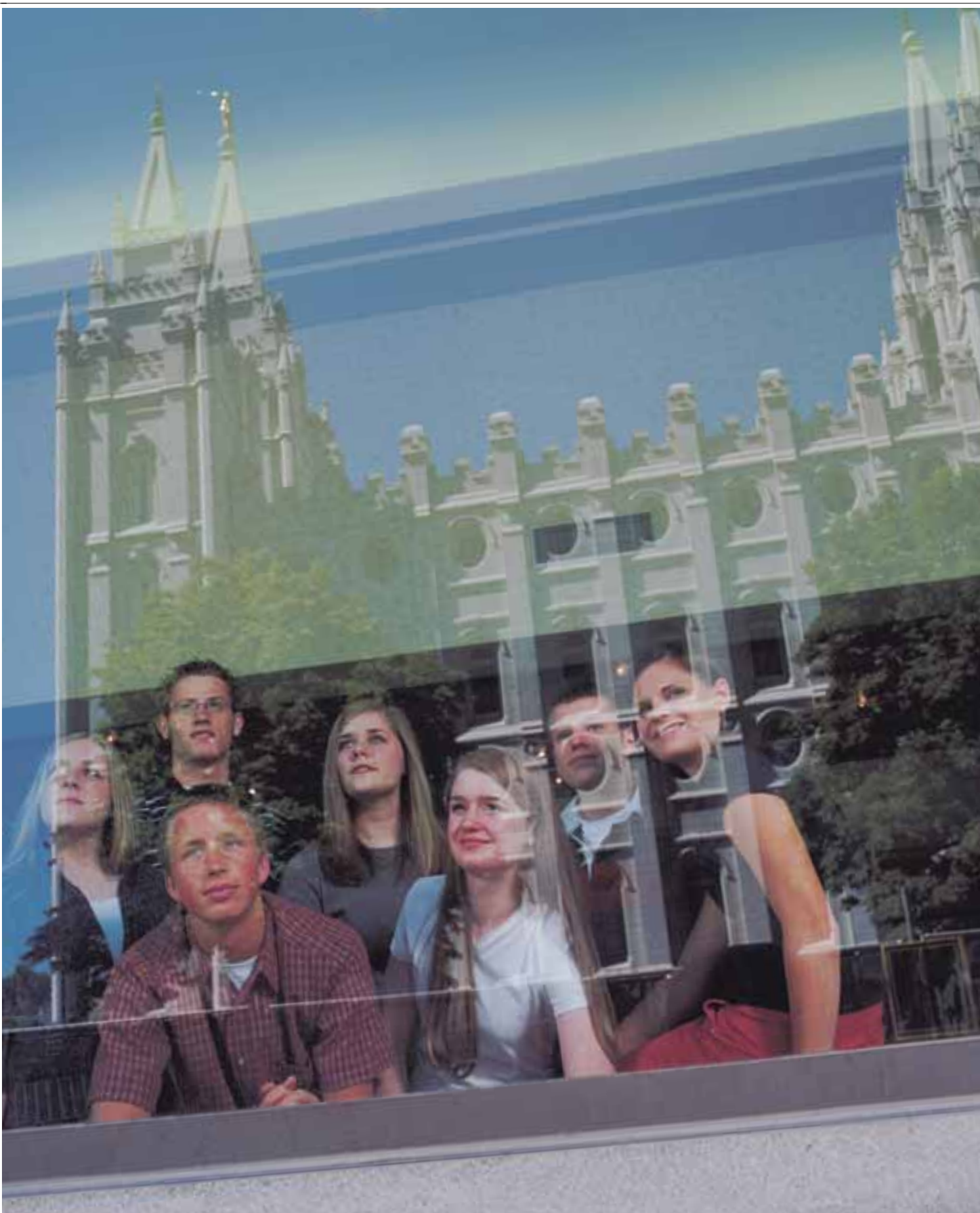
The youth are responsible for their own choices. But as faithful parents, teachers, leaders, and friends, we shore up the faith of young people. And we must raise our sights.

The place to begin is with our aim, our vision of what we seek in the lives of our young people. As teachers, we have always

sought to inspire the young people in our classes. As parents and leaders, we have always had a goal that they will qualify for the mission field and for temple marriage and then remain faithful. Those are lofty, difficult goals, but we must raise our sights.

Too many of our young people want the blessings of a mission and the temple and yet fail to meet the qualifications to claim them. For many of our youth, next year is a long way away, and beyond a year looks like forever. To them, missions and the temple are far distant, in some future time when the joys of youth have flown away. Those goals are distant enough that too many, far too many, say to themselves: “Well, I know I may have to repent someday, and I know that a mission and temple marriage will require big changes, but I can always take care of that when the time comes. I have a testimony. I know the scriptures. I know what it takes to repent. I’ll see the bishop when it’s time, and I’ll make the changes later. I’m only young once. For now, I’ll go with the flow.”

Well, the flow has become a flood and soon will be a torrent. It will become a torrent of sounds and sights and sensations that invite temptation and offend the Spirit of God. Swimming back upstream to purity against the tides of the world was never easy. It is getting harder and may soon be frighteningly difficult.



The Pure Gospel Changes Lives

The pure gospel of Jesus Christ must go down into the hearts of young people by the power of the Holy Ghost. It will not be enough for them to have had a spiritual witness of the truth and to want good things later. It will not be enough for them to hope for some future cleansing and strengthening. Our aim must be for them to become truly converted to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ while they are young.

Then they will have gained a strength from what they are, not only from what they know. They will become disciples of Christ. They will be His spiritual children who always remember Him with gratitude and in faith. They will then have the Holy Ghost as a constant companion. Their hearts will be turned outward, concerned for the temporal and spiritual welfare of others. They will walk humbly. They will feel cleansed, and they will look on evil with abhorrence.

The Book of Mormon describes such a change and testifies that it is possible. The accounts are found everywhere in the book. One evidence is the experience of the people of King Benjamin, the master teacher:

“And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had thus spoken to his people, he sent among them, desiring to know of his people if they believed the words which he had spoken unto them.

“And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the

Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.

“And we, ourselves, also, through the infinite goodness of God, and the manifestations of his Spirit, have great views of that which is to come; and were it expedient, we could prophesy of all things.

“And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king has spoken unto us that has brought us to this great knowledge, whereby we do rejoice with such exceedingly great joy.

“And we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he shall command us, all the remainder of our days, that we may not bring upon ourselves a never-ending torment, as has been spoken by the angel, that we may not drink out of the cup of the wrath of God.

“And now, these are the words which king Benjamin desired of them; and therefore he said unto them: Ye have spoken the words that I desired; and the covenant which ye have made is a righteous covenant.

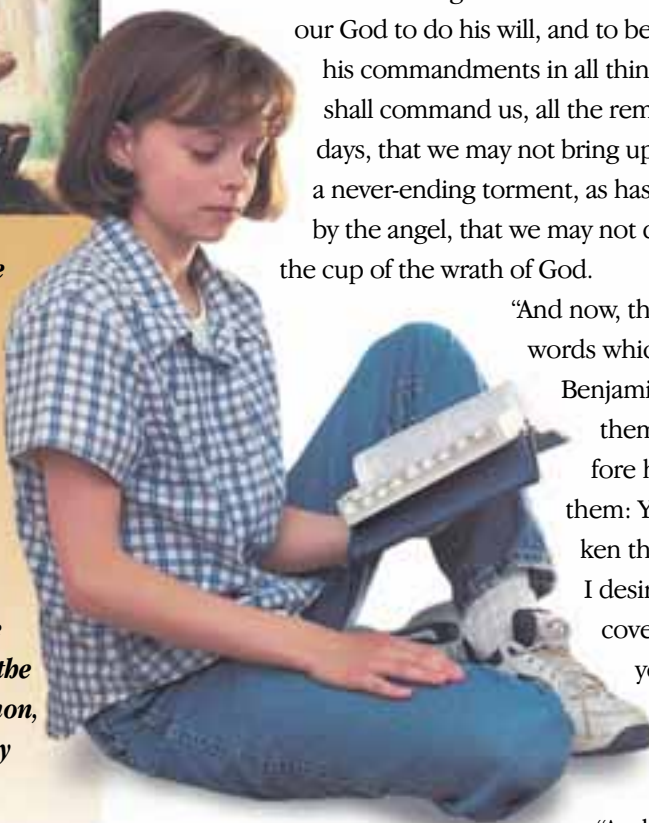
“And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:1–7).

That mighty change is reported time after time in the



PAINTING BY DEL PARSON

The pure gospel of Jesus Christ must change the hearts of young people. That mighty change is reported time after time in the Book of Mormon, as revealed by Joseph Smith.



Book of Mormon. The way it is wrought and what the person becomes are always the same. The words of God in pure doctrine go down deep into the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. The person pleads with God in faith. The repentant heart is broken and the spirit contrite. Sacred covenants have been made. Then God keeps His covenant to grant a new heart and a new life, in His time.

Teach in a Simple Way

Whether the miracle comes in a moment or over years, as is far more common, it is the doctrine of Jesus Christ that drives the change. We sometimes underestimate the power that pure doctrine has to penetrate the hearts of people. Why did so many respond to the words of the missionaries when the Church was so young, so small, and seemingly so strange? What did Elders Brigham Young and John Taylor and Heber C. Kimball preach in the streets and on the hills of England? They taught that the Lord had opened a new dispensation, that He had given us a prophet of God, that the priesthood was restored, that the Book of Mormon was the word of God, and that we had a glorious new day. They taught that the pure gospel of Jesus Christ had been restored.

That pure doctrine went down into the hearts then, as it will now, because the people were starved and the doctrine was taught simply. The people of England, and our young people, were seen long before by a prophet of God named Amos:

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will

send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

“And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.

“In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst” (Amos 8:11–13).



PAINTING BY ROBERT T. BARRETT

If we make the doctrine simple and clear, and if we teach out of our own changed hearts, the change for our youth will come as surely as it did for Enos.

Most of those early converts in England had known they were hungry for the true word of God. Our young people may not know that they are fainting from famine, but the words of God will slake a thirst they did not know they had, and the Holy Ghost will take it down into their hearts. If we make the doctrine simple and clear, and if we teach out of our own changed hearts, the change for them will come as surely as it did for Enos. Listen to his account, so similar to the others:

“Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it—

“And I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before

God, before I received a remission of my sins.

“Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart.

“And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto

him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens” (Enos 1:1–4).

And then the miracle came:

“And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.

“And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away.

“And I said: Lord, how is it done?

“And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole” (vv. 5–8).

Then Enos describes the first effects:

“Now, it came to pass that when I had heard these words I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them” (v. 9).

He ends with a description of the lasting effects:

“And it came to pass that I began to be old, and an hundred and seventy and nine years had passed away from the time that our father Lehi left Jerusalem.

“And I saw that I must soon go down to my grave, having been wrought upon by the power of God that I must preach and prophesy unto this people, and declare the word according to the truth which is in Christ. And I have declared it in all my days, and have rejoiced in it above that of the world.

“And I soon go to the place of my rest, which is with my

Redeemer; for I know that in him I shall rest. And I rejoice in the day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and shall stand before him; then shall I see his face with pleasure, and he will say unto me: Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father. Amen” (vv. 25–27).

What we seek for our young people is this kind of change

Enos experienced. We must be humble about our part in it. True conversion depends on seeking freely in faith, with great effort and some pain. Then it is the Lord who can grant, in His time, the miracle of cleansing and change. Each person starts from a different place, with a different set of experiences, and so a different need for cleansing and for change. The Lord knows that place, and so only He can set the course.

But for all of our youth, we can play a vital part. Enos remembered the words of eternal life that he had been taught. So did Nephi, and so did the people of King Benjamin. The words had been placed in memory in such a way that the Holy Ghost could take them deep into the heart. Our charge is to place those words so that when the young person chooses and pleads, the Holy Ghost can confirm them in the heart and the miracle can begin.

Teach in Plainness

Much of the power of the Book of Mormon is that it presents the pure doctrine so plainly. For instance, as if He were speaking to us, the Lord through prophets gave us these words in 2 Nephi:



Too many of our young people want the blessings of a mission and the temple and yet fail to meet the qualifications to claim them. We can help change that.



“And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen” (2 Nephi 31:21).

And the Lord repeats Himself, as if we might misunderstand:

“And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the

Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me.

“And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.

“And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 11:32–35).

And He goes on to say it yet again:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

“And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Invite family members to share examples of temptations faced today. How might they be different from those of 20 or 40 years ago? Discuss today’s changing moral climate (see the first two paragraphs of this article). According to Elder Eyring, what must be the aim or purpose in teaching? How can this be accomplished?

2. Draw a target with “Truly Converted” written at its center. Using the ideas in this article, discuss what it means to be truly converted. Invite family members to write a doctrine from this article on a paper arrow. Attach the arrows to the target. Testify of our need for the Savior in becoming truly converted.

when the floods come and the winds beat upon them.

“Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth” (vv. 39–41).

A Higher Vision

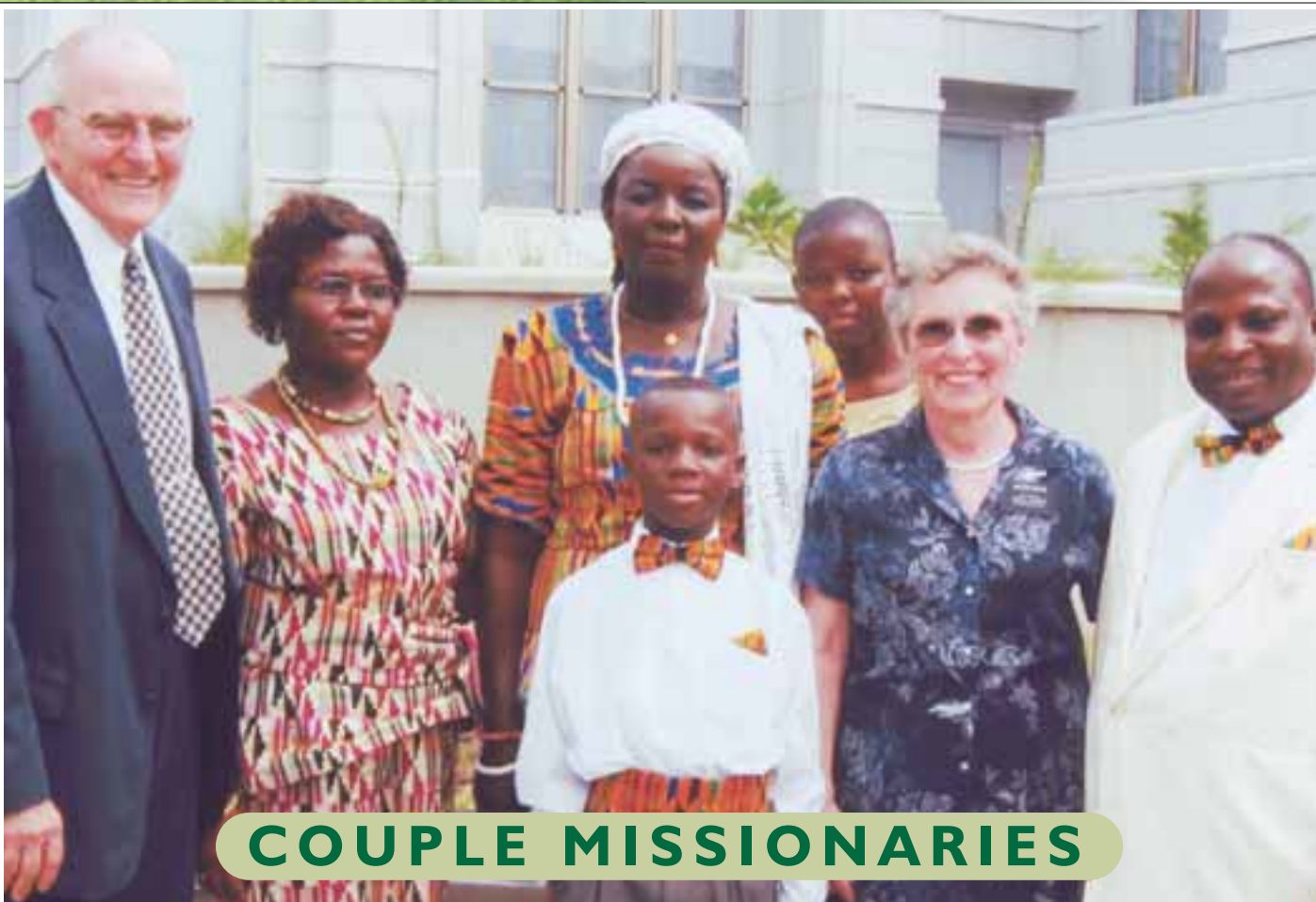
We can raise our sights by adding greater faith that the change promised by the Lord will come to our youth and that more of them will make the choices that lead to true conversion. The Lord always keeps His promises. We can exercise our faith that He will keep His word for our young people and for ourselves.

As a witness of Jesus Christ, I testify that the promises are true. Our Heavenly Father lives. Jesus is the

Christ. By having faith in Him and keeping His commandments, we and our young people can have eternal life. I know that the word of God can be carried into the hearts of men and women by the power of the Holy Ghost. And I know that the blessing the Lord has given so freely since the world began, of a new heart, unspotted and filled with His pure love, is still offered in His true Church. I testify that He invites all to become His true disciples, His sons and His daughters.

There is great safety as the young people of the Church accept the gospel into their lives. There will be safety even in the times of great difficulty that are coming. There is a protection that they will have—because of the mighty change that has come in their hearts. They will choose righteousness and find that they have no more desire to do evil. That change will come. It will not come in an instant; it will come over time. And there will be a fortification created by the gospel of Jesus Christ through your faith and through your great efforts. ■

Adapted from an address delivered on 14 August 2001 at a Church Educational System religious educators’ conference at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.



COUPLE MISSIONARIES

GOING THE SECOND MILE

These couples bear testimony that the Lord helped them magnify their talents while in the mission field.

BY LARENE PORTER GAUNT
Church Magazines

When John and Pat Bevan from Salt Lake City, Utah, decided to serve another mission, they never dreamed they would be called to serve in such places as Ghana, Nigeria, and Ivory Coast as Africa West Area family history advisers. They were surprised—Pat because it was Africa and John because it was family history—but they willingly accepted the call from the Lord.

Like other missionaries, they soon found opportunities to use their unique blend of talents. Sister Bevan was well

versed in family history, but Elder Bevan started at the beginning and as a result became an understanding teacher. They helped establish or strengthen 27 family history centers and trained hundreds of members to input their oral family history on the stake computer. As a result, many names were gathered for the Aba Nigeria Temple. Now, 18 months after finishing their family history mission, the Bevans have returned to Africa to serve again—this time as temple workers.

Such is the experience of many senior missionary couples. They may feel hesitant in the beginning, but once in the mission field, they soon feel comfortable and enthusiastic. Why? Because they quickly see how much they and their talents are needed.

Following are stories of couple missionaries who

discovered ways to use their talents to bless the lives of others.

The Lord Is Smiling on Africa

Lamont and Janet Andersen of Calgary, Canada, served as proselyting missionaries in the Ghana Accra Mission. “We began our mission in the small village of Kissi near Cape Coast, where there were 20 members,” says Elder Andersen. “Three months later there were 80.” There was no need for the Andersens to tract; the people came to them. They taught outdoors under the trees, sitting on a wooden bench and using a new member as their translator.

Like the Andersens, most senior missionary

USING TALENTS AND GIFTS



“Retired couples have talents and abilities that are often not used after they retire. People with special

skills in the health field, such as doctors and dentists, are always needed. Teachers and farmers provide invaluable services.

“Serving a mission gives retired people a chance to use their talents and gifts again. They discover that they are truly needed, and as a consequence they find a powerful new sense of direction in life.”

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Couple Missionaries—A Wonderful Resource,” Ensign, Feb. 1996, 7.

advisers in West Africa. Their teaching and consultation skills proved invaluable as they traveled the area checking hospitals and clinics to recommend for the treatment of missionaries. They loved Africa. Their positive attitude and great sense of humor

couples in Africa say they wouldn’t have missed this experience for anything in the world. In fact, the Andersens have returned to Nigeria as humanitarian missionaries.

Keith Merrill, a retired physician from Tennessee, and his wife, Diane, served as medical



Far left: Elder and Sister Bevan join Bishop Philip Xaxagbe and his family at the dedication of the Accra Ghana Temple. Left to right: Elder John Bevan; Adjoa, Agnes, and Abinadi Xaxagbe; Joyce Logo (niece); Sister Pat Bevan; and Bishop Philip Xaxagbe.

Above: Sister Pat Bevan helps a member prepare a TempleReady disk.



Sister Pat Bevan holds Isaac Ofori on the day of his blessing as his mother, Victoria, stands by.



Above: Sister Diane Merrill with her neighbors. Below right: Outside under the trees, Elder Keith Merrill, a doctor, checks the blood pressure of refugees in the Buduburam Liberian Refugee Camp.

proved to be contagious to others.

“We had touching experiences at the Buduburam Liberian Refugee Camp,” says Elder Merrill. “Here we taught the people hygiene skills and how to take care of themselves with simple remedies for common ailments.”

Today the Merrills are serving another mission in Africa, where Elder Merrill is the area medical adviser.

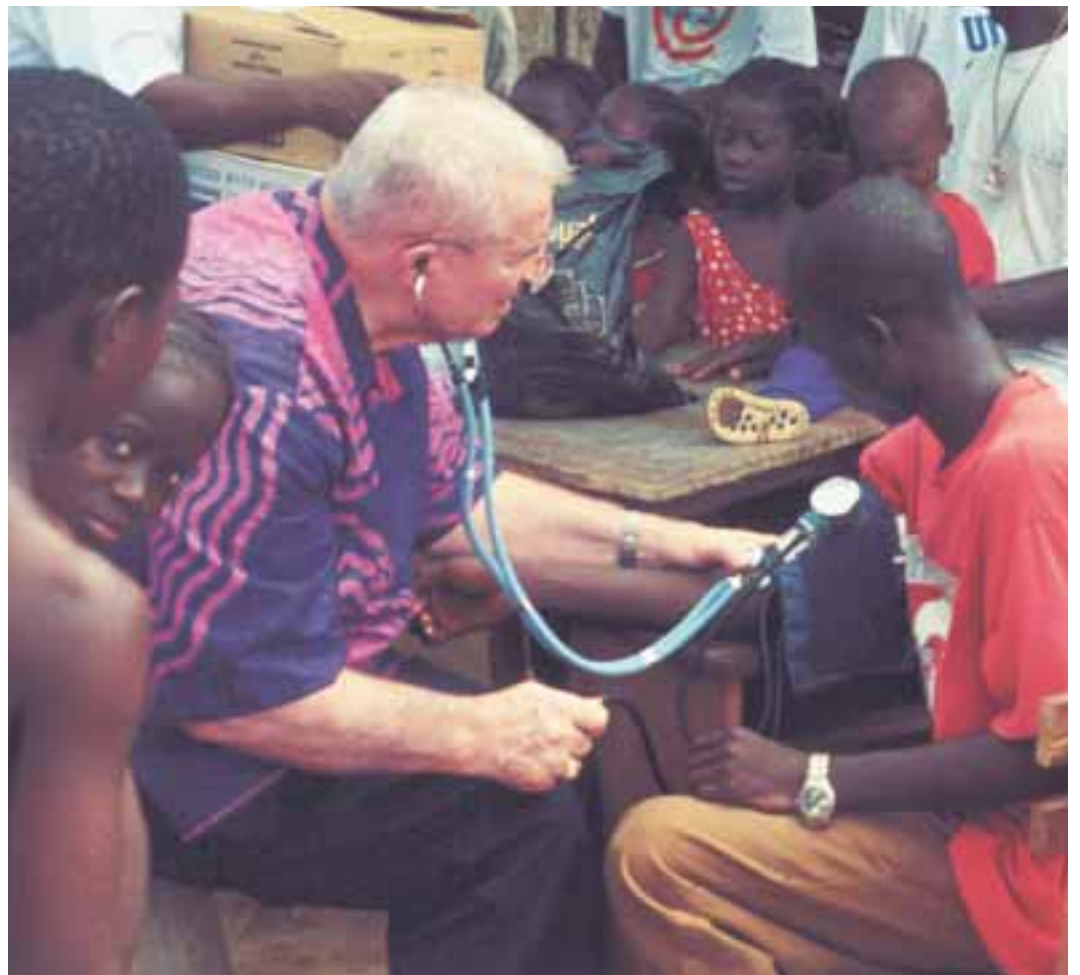
Grant and Marilyn Barton of Provo, Utah, served as the Africa West Area humanitarian directors. Theirs was a massive task of overseeing multiple LDS Charities projects such as the digging of wells and the shipments of food, clothing, books, hygiene and newborn kits, and medical supplies. They also organized and scheduled medical clinics, employment resources training, and educational projects.

“The people in Africa have physical challenges, but they have learned to cope and find joy and peace without all the material things of life,” says Sister Barton. “We have grown and gained more insight into the real beauty of life than we could ever give.”

Nauvoo Bricks and Books of Mormon

Everett H. and Verna Belcher of Park City, Utah, certainly didn’t realize that they would leave a legacy when they were called to serve in Nauvoo, Illinois, in April 1978. Once in Nauvoo, however, they discovered a need. As guides at the Lucy Mack Smith brick home, the Belchers were frequently asked how there could be so many brick buildings in a frontier town. The Belchers learned that the Saints had made the bricks by hand.

“Eventually I approached the mission president and suggested that we create a





Above: Missionaries Everett and Verna Belcher stand in front of the brick kiln they built in Nauvoo in 1980. Left: Elder Belcher works the clay in his brick-making shed in 1980. He then molds the clay into bricks (below) and stamps a design of his own creation into the bricks before firing them in the kiln (below left). Upper left corner: Finished bricks.

brick-making demonstration,” says Elder Belcher. “The mission president authorized me to go ahead. This led us to an in-depth research effort. With the help of the librarians at the Library of Congress and a source in England, I learned all that I could about the lost art of making bricks by hand and the technical requirements of molding clay. After six months, I showed the mission president my research, and he said to proceed.

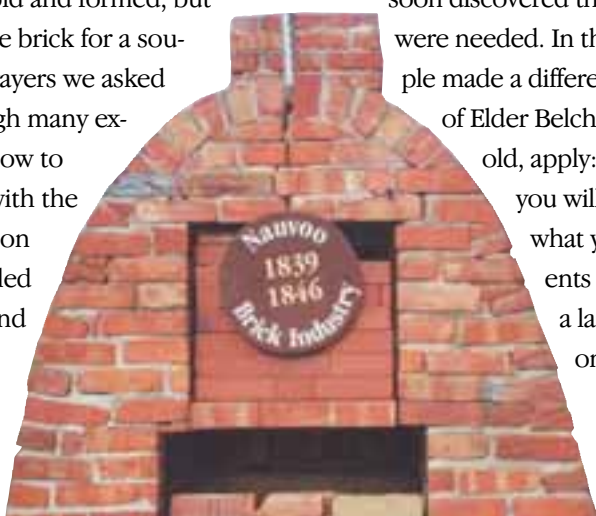
“At first I just demonstrated how the clay was thrown into the mold and formed, but visitors wanted a full-size brick for a souvenir. Through many prayers we asked for guidance and through many experiments we learned how to create souvenir bricks with the word *Nauvoo* stamped on each one. These bricks led to gospel discussions, and many visitors accepted

copies of the Book of Mormon.”

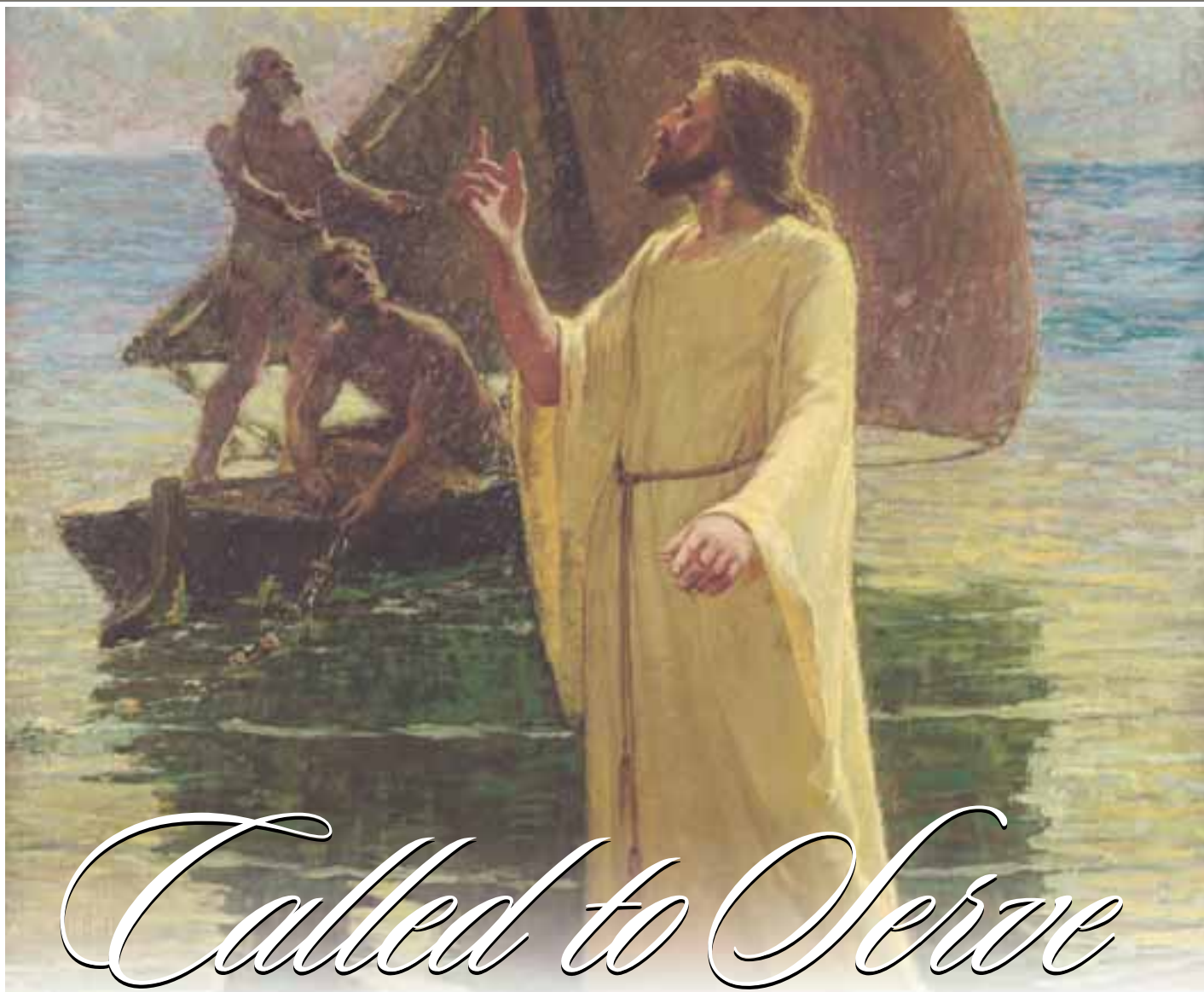
The Belchers extended their 18-month mission another year. The design they created in 1980 is still in use today in the Nauvoo brickyard.

Courage to Serve

The lives of these missionary couples have been forever changed because of their decision to serve a mission—and so have the lives of those they served. In the beginning, they all felt tentative about serving a mission, but they soon discovered that their talents were needed. In the end, each couple made a difference. The words of Elder Belcher, now 89 years old, apply: “Unless you go, you will never know what you and your talents might do to leave a lasting influence on others.” ■



PHOTOGRAPHY BY DICK BROWN AND COURTESY OF THE FAMILIES OF LAWONT AND JANET ANDERSON AND EVERETT AND VERNA BELCHER



Called to Serve

BY COLEEN K. MENLOVE
Primary General President

Some may think people are called to a position in the Church because they have perfected talents and abilities that suit them for the calling. I am learning that perhaps we are sometimes called because we need to *develop* specific talents and attributes. The Lord knows us, and He knows which callings or opportunities will help us grow to spiritual maturity.

In Luke we read of the growth of the Savior from childhood into adulthood: “And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40).



The Lord knows us, and He knows which callings or opportunities will help us grow to spiritual maturity.

Through experience, effort, faithfulness, and the grace of God, we too gain spiritual maturity, wax strong in spirit, and become filled with wisdom. As we serve in a calling, we can develop a heightened sensitivity to the promptings of the Spirit, and thus our wisdom can be enhanced beyond our own understanding.

The experience of being newly called seems to have common elements for many of us. I would like to share a few journal entries from a sister I will call Lisa. Even though Lisa was a ward Primary president, her feelings may be similar to those newly called to serve in any Church position. See if there are some elements common to your own experience.

Fear and Faith

Lisa writes: “I can sum up my feelings in four words: fear, faith, humility, and peace. Fear set in as I realized I would be responsible for all that happened in our Primary. I started to think of all the things I would have to do and all the things I didn’t know how to do. Now *I* was the responsible adult. I was scared to death. At this time, I realized that my ‘great and wonderful’ ideas might not be what the Lord had in mind.”

Fear can paralyze us if we allow it. Satan promotes fear that he might have power over us.

Satan also promotes darkness. In both Lehi’s and Nephi’s dreams, darkness in the form of a mist confused some and caused them to lose sight of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 8:23; 12:4). Darkness was part of the Prophet Joseph Smith’s experience in the grove just before he was instructed by God the Father and Jesus Christ (see Joseph Smith—History 1:15–16). Many have allowed darkness to keep them from the love of God. Satan’s way is to confuse and discourage or, at the very least, distract us from doing what Heavenly Father would have us do.

Five years ago, when I received a telephone call inviting me to meet with President Gordon B. Hinckley, I hoped I was being called to help on a committee—plan a dinner, set up, prepare the food—anything I already knew how to do. When President Hinckley asked me if I would accept a calling to serve as Primary general president, I felt intense fear. I wondered, “How could this be possible?” I had to work hard to replace fear with faith. In fact, the first question I was asked by President Hinckley was, “How is your faith?” I felt his question was preparing me to know that

faith would be important in the days to come. Faith would be needed to remove fear. I needed to be reminded that all things are possible with the Lord. I needed to have the faith spoken of in one of the scriptures Primary children love and sing about so often: “I will go and do the things which

Sometimes we may feel fearful when we receive a new calling, but we can learn to turn our fear into faith.



the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7).

Isn’t it wonderful that Heavenly Father loves us so much that He calls us to serve in ways which give us opportunities to replace fear with faith and to grow spiritually? Jesus said,

“Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not” (D&C 6:36). That is faith. All of us have to learn to turn our fear into faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Humility

As we approach our callings, we also feel humility. Lisa, the newly called Primary president, wrote: “After faith, the lesson of humility was next. As the Lord began to unfold my weaknesses before my eyes, I felt like my soul was being exposed. I knew I could not do this job without the Lord, and it wouldn’t be my ideas that would be most important. It would be the Lord’s plan.”

She began to understand that Heavenly Father was mindful of her weaknesses and yet He loved her. She also began to understand that through prayer, fasting, and scripture study, she could humbly prepare to receive personal revelation beyond her own understanding.

As we come to know that our Heavenly Father loves us, we feel greater love for Him and for our Savior, and we desire to become more worthy to inherit His kingdom. A familiar scripture instructs us in the importance of humility: “And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them” (Ether 12:27).

The Lord asked Nephi many times to do things that were difficult. Nephi humbly went to the mountains, where he inquired of the Lord time and time again to receive instruction (see 1 Nephi 18:3).

We too are asked to do things we are uncertain about. We need to return to our personal “mountain” often to receive instructions regarding our concerns and responsibilities. We return to the mountain by reading, studying, pondering the scriptures with faith, praying, fasting, and attending the temple.

Peace

As we replace fear with faith and then demonstrate our humility, we are blessed with a feeling of peace. Lisa said: “Peace finally came after I was sustained and set apart. I felt a little excitement, but not without caution and humility close behind. I began to gain greater insight into the love our Savior and Heavenly Father have for me. It is a deeply felt love I have experienced.”

The Lord trusts and loves us enough to want to use us in blessing the lives of others. What a wonderful feeling of peace and joy that knowledge can bring! In Helaman we read, “Peace, peace be unto you, because of your faith in my Well Beloved” (Helaman 5:47).

Spiritual Growth

This experience of being newly called, with its common elements of fear turning to faith, humility, and joyful peace, provides us with opportunities for spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is part of our Father’s eternal plan for us.

It is an experience not just for the newly called but for all of us throughout our lives. Because we are human and because Satan would like to stop our progression, moments of self-doubt and confusion will creep in. Callings that produce growth will continue to create some discomfort. Heavenly Father has chosen the time and place for us to learn the earthly lessons He has designed for each of us. We came to earth for the very purpose of being tested and gaining necessary experience. My son has counseled me, “Take a deep breath and remember who you work for.”

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reminds us: “The Church is a place where imperfect people gather to help and strengthen each other as we strive to return to our Heavenly Father. . . . We will each progress at different rates. . . .

“ . . . When you magnify your calling, you don’t merely go through the motions; you challenge yourself to serve in the place you are called with all your heart, might, mind, and strength.”¹

Everything we do in our callings—teaching, loving, enduring, serving—we do better when we seek and receive the guidance of the Spirit. And in the process we grow spiritually.

The Release

With the call comes a “to be released” clause. Some of you will be released this year, and some not for years to come. Let’s look ahead to that experience. I would like to share some thoughts from a Primary president just recently released. Notice her faith, humility, and sense of peace and joy, and try to sense her spiritual growth:

“I knew a few months before my release that my time as a Primary president was coming to an end. I had learned the things I was supposed to learn and felt other women needed this opportunity for their spiritual growth. My first feeling was one of complete loss. . . . I thought of how rejuvenating Primary was for me. I was really sad to know I would be missing sharing with the children that special witness of Jesus Christ and God’s divine plan on a weekly basis. But I knew the Lord would bless

another to teach the children well.” This is faith.

“I thought of all the children who had sat on my lap because they were scared, sad, or needed some help because they were a little too active. I would miss the hugs—especially those that came from children who would, for no apparent reason, jump up right in the middle of sharing time and give me a big hug around the waist. It was a great feeling to know that the children trusted me.” This is humility.

“I would especially miss the humor—such as the time when a young boy announced in Primary prior to sacrament meeting that his father was the new bishop. There was the time five-year-old Rebekah wanted to tell the entire Primary how babies were made. Did you know I am the best ice skater in Primary? At least I fell down the fewest number of times. I used talents I didn’t know I had. I had a great experience and received many blessings. Primary service was an unexpected answer to a heartfelt prayer. It occupied my heart and soul.” This is joy and peace.

Being released from a calling we love is part of the growth process that occurs when we serve in the Church.

The Blessings of Callings

A call to serve is an invitation from Heavenly Father for greater spiritual growth. It is a call to overcome fear with faith and to learn greater humility as we accept the Lord’s will. The call can bring the peace and joy of eternal progression. It is an opportunity to be part of the miracle and wonder of this great cause and kingdom that is sweeping over the earth, blessing the lives of people wherever it reaches.

Our calling goes beyond the one our priesthood leader extended to each of us. We have an individual responsibility for our own soul and its growth. This calling is one our priesthood leader will not release us from. Our calls to serve will bless our efforts to understand the plan of salvation and live gospel principles. Callings can help us better love and teach our families. They give us opportunities to grow stronger spiritually, to wax strong in spirit, filled with greater wisdom and the grace of God through the Atonement of Jesus Christ (see Luke 2:40). As we learn the eternal plan and feel the love of Heavenly Father and the

Savior, we will love and teach those we are called to serve with great power and influence through the Holy Spirit. ■

NOTE

1. “Lessons Learned in the Journey of Life,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2000, 11.



Teaching as the Savior Taught



As we make an effort to teach as the Savior taught, we become more like Him.

The Savior used memory questions, reasoning questions, and questions for the heart. We can use them also.

BY ELDER WALTER F. GONZÁLEZ
Of the Seventy

Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27). This invitation from the Savior to become as He is reaches into all aspects of our lives, including our responsibility as teachers of the gospel. We can learn to become better teachers not only from His precepts but also from the way He taught.

The Savior used a variety of approaches to touch the lives of those around Him. Notice, for example, the way He asked questions. Among the questions the Savior asked were those that probed the memory of His listeners, those intended to provoke reasoning, and those directed to His followers’ feelings.

Memory Questions

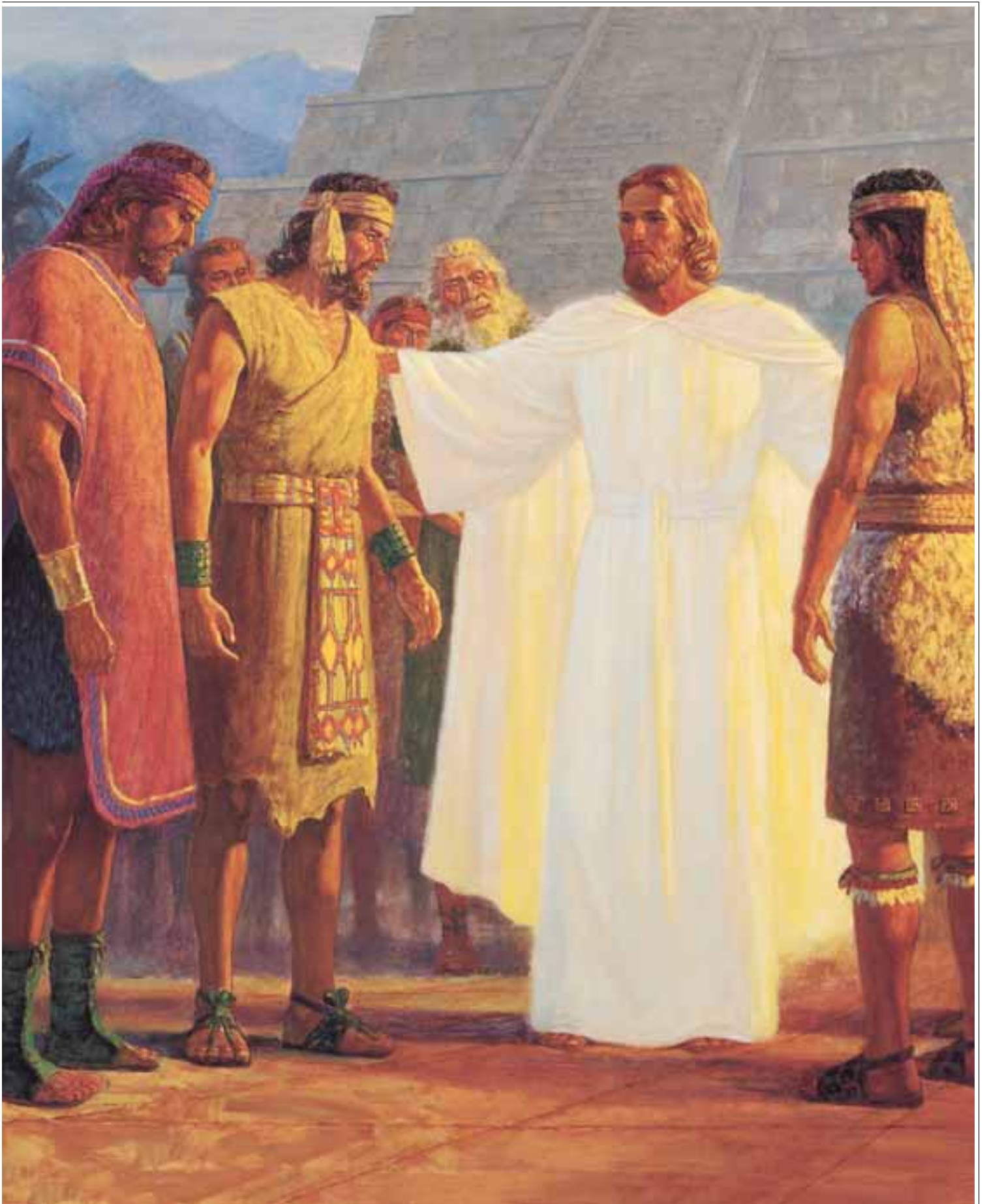
On a certain occasion a lawyer, an interpreter of the law, asked the Lord what he should do to inherit eternal life. The Savior responded to this question with other questions, saying: “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” (Luke 10:26).

The answer was found in the lawyer’s memory. Once he answered correctly, the Savior reinforced the individual by saying, “Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live” (Luke 10:28).

On another occasion, “Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat” (Matthew 12:1). Then the Pharisees said that His disciples were breaking the law of the Sabbath. The Savior responded with questions aimed at the Pharisees’ memory:

“Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him;

“How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not



lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?" (Matthew 12:3–4).

Questions that jog the memory of others are probably the easiest for us to use. These questions tend to show how well class members know the letter of the law. As a new young member, I assumed that these were the kind of questions teachers should ask. Therefore, I tried to acquire some knowledge of historical events—names, dates, places, and so forth. This was a good thing to do, because most of the questions in school and in the Church were memory questions, intended to give class members an opportunity to participate in the lesson. These were good questions, but they did not have a strong impact on my behavior or on my becoming more like Him. It is important to note that the Savior also used other kinds of questions to help His listeners in the quest to become as He is.

Reasoning Questions

When the lawyer asked the question “Who is my neighbour?” the Savior related the parable of the good Samaritan and afterward asked, “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?” (Luke 10:29, 36).

This question made the lawyer and other listeners reason to find an answer. This kind of question makes us rely on our ability to discover knowledge. Questions such as “What do you think of . . . ?” or “What is your opinion about . . . ?” or “Why . . . ?” can help us understand one another (see D&C 50:22). Consider the following examples from the Savior’s teaching:

“*How think ye?* if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?” (Matthew 18:12; emphasis added).

“*But what think ye?* A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard” (Matthew 21:28; emphasis added).

Sometimes rhetorical questions—questions asked with

no answer expected—can also help increase understanding between the one preaching and the one listening. In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord said:

“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

“And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?” (Matthew 5:46–47).

My wife remembers how her life was touched by a question the missionaries asked. She had an extensive religious background, and one day her brother invited her to hear the missionaries. After teaching doctrine, they directed a question at her reasoning: “Why do you think The



The Savior asked a question that allowed the disciples to express their own feelings: “But whom say ye that I am?”

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true Church?” The thoughts this question inspired affected her in such a way that a few seconds later her feelings were also touched. Tears came to her eyes on answering that question, and the Spirit testified to her, thus deepening the conversion process she experienced.

Questions for the Heart

Each of us has been asked questions that help us express our feelings. We also know that we will not express our feelings unless we feel confident they will not be criticized. Such was the case when the Savior directed questions to His listeners’ hearts.

In the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, the Savior asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” The disciples answered that some were saying He was John the Baptist; others said Jeremias or one of the prophets.

Then the Savior asked a question that allowed the disciples to express their own feelings: “*But whom say ye that I am?*”

Simon Peter shared his feelings: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Our Master reinforced the answer of the chief Apostle by saying, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:13–17; emphasis added).



During another teaching opportunity after Martha's brother Lazarus had died, the Savior first testified of Himself by saying, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Then He directed a question to Martha's heart: *"Believest thou this?"*

Martha was able to express her feelings: "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (John 11:25–27; emphasis added).

We know that "when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men" (2 Nephi 33:1). Appropriate questions directed to the heart can invite the Spirit into any teaching situation.

At a recent family gathering a family member told of a question a missionary asked that had touched her heart. After teaching the first discussion, this missionary simply asked her, "How did you feel about our teachings?" This question created an excellent and edifying conclusion for the discussion.

Questions that allow people to express their feelings might include: "Why do you believe . . . ?" or "How do you feel about . . . ?" or "Have any of you had an experience with . . . ?" All teachers need to understand

that when feelings are expressed, we are standing on sacred ground. Feelings should not be demanded, but when shared willingly, they should always be respected and never criticized in any way.

Learn of Him

The Savior is the exemplary teacher from whom we can learn to teach in our homes, in the Church, and in the community. As He said to the Nephites, "Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you" (3 Nephi 18:16). Or as He explained to His disciples, "Ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do" (3 Nephi 27:21).

An excellent exercise in our schooling to become Christlike is observing the kind of questions we ask others in formal and informal teaching settings. Asking questions to retrieve information will teach us about others' knowledge. Asking questions that cause others to reason will help them discover truths. Asking questions that allow others to express feelings will take us onto sacred ground in the conversion and edifying of those we love. As we make an effort to teach as He taught, we become more like Him. ■

The Savior is the exemplary teacher from whom we can learn to teach in our homes, in the Church, and in the community. As He said to the Nephites, *"Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you."*



Turning the Other Cheek



BY ELDER JAMES DUNLOP

Area Authority Seventy
Australia/New Zealand Area

Numerous passages in the Book of Mormon make it clear that the Lord requires us to forbear, forgive, and seek reconciliation when we are offended.

Among them are these verses:

“And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. . . .

“ . . . I say unto you, that ye shall not resist evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (3 Nephi 12:9, 39).

“If ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (3 Nephi 13:15).

What are the results of seeking revenge? How can we turn the other cheek while we are smarting from injustice and agitated by fiery emotions? Let’s look at several examples from the Book of Mormon.

Two Responses to Oppression

The Book of Mormon describes dire consequences that have resulted from responding

aggressively to insults; it also describes blessings that have come when aggressive feelings have been restrained. Consider the contrast between the people of King Limhi and the people of Alma. These groups were of the same nation, living in the same era. A series of events led to both groups being ruled by harsh Lamanite taskmasters. In response to being smitten and laden with heavy burdens, King Limhi’s people reacted with force. They attacked their oppressors three times, and each time they were defeated and incurred dreadful loss of life. Their nation was plunged into grief and mourning. It was only when they humbled themselves and pleaded with the Lord that a way was found for them to escape their oppressors. (See Mosiah 21–22.)

Alma and his people were also persecuted and treated as beasts of burden, but unlike King Limhi’s people, they submitted meekly. They poured out their hearts to the Lord, and He comforted them and eased their burdens. When they had demonstrated their faith and humility, the Lord led them to freedom. These experiences caused all of Alma’s

Soft answers do turn away wrath, and peacemakers are most certainly blessed. But when we are treated unfairly, many of us are assailed with thoughts of revenge. What will help us keep these thoughts under control?



people, including their children, to rejoice and praise God for His mercy and deliverance. (See Mosiah 23–24.)

“Some Did Return Railing for Railing”

A dramatic example of the consequences of not turning the other cheek occurred among the Nephites during the decade that preceded the Savior’s Crucifixion and visit to the Americas. Following a successful struggle against the Gadianton robbers, peace was established, and “there was nothing in all the land to hinder the people from prospering continually, except they should fall into transgression” (3 Nephi 6:5). However, within three years, pride and contention crept in. “Some were lifted up in pride, and others were exceedingly humble; some did return railing for railing, while others would receive railing and persecution and all manner of afflictions, and would not turn and revile

again, but were humble and penitent before God” (3 Nephi 6:13). In the space of just four years, “the church began to be broken up,” the people were “carried about by the temptations of the devil whithersoever he desired,” they “did wilfully rebel against God,” they “set at defiance the law and the rights of their country,” and they caused “great contention in the land” (3 Nephi 6:14, 17, 18, 30; 7:7). Five years after the commencement of this apostasy, at the time of the Savior’s Crucifixion, cataclysmic destruction visited these people (see 3 Nephi 8). It is sobering to think that returning “railing for railing” was an early step on the path that quickly led to this people’s spiritual and physical destruction.

A Model of Meekness

Few of us will ever receive such a stinging, undeserved rebuke as the one that came to the Nephite governor



Pahoran from General Moroni. It was a critical time. The Nephites were fighting an invasion on several fronts against superior numbers when some of them, the “king-men,” rose up in insurrection against Pahoran, forcing him to flee from his capital. Unaware of this, Moroni was angry when the vital supplies and reinforcements he expected Pahoran to send did not arrive. He wrote a blistering epistle to the embattled Pahoran, accusing him of “thoughtless stupor” (Alma 60:7), “idleness” (Alma 60:22), and indifference to the suffering and death of the Nephite soldiers.

The injustice of these accusations might have made it natural for Pahoran to reply in anger, which may well have resulted in the premature fall of the Nephite nation. However, his reply was a model of meekness and humility. He wrote, “And now, in your epistle you have censured me, but it mattereth not; I am not angry, but do rejoice in the greatness of your heart” (Alma 61:9). He then proposed the strategy that ended the insurrection and saved the Nephite nation.

Preventing Angry Feelings

What was true for these people is true for us. Soft answers do turn away wrath, and peacemakers are most certainly blessed. But when we are treated unfairly, many of us are assailed with thoughts of revenge. What will help us keep these thoughts under control? Even better, is there anything that would prevent anger and indignation from rising in our hearts?

Seeking to understand the perspective of others can often help assuage feelings of anger.

When King Lamoni’s father asked, “What shall I do that I may . . . [have] this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast?” Aaron counseled him to repent and call on God in faith, believing that he would receive (see Alma 22:15–16). The king did so, and the Lord granted his earnest plea for a change in heart. If we will follow Aaron’s counsel and call on God in faith, we may also have our hearts freed from contentious and vengeful feelings. Answers will most likely come to us as quiet promptings from the Spirit.

As a young man I received an answer in such a way. At the time my acquaintances frequently targeted me for teasing. I doubt they really intended to offend me, but I felt embarrassed and alienated. As I pondered this, it occurred to me that if I understood why people said and did these things, I would not be hurt by them.

I prayed for a greater ability to understand others, and my desire was granted. This effort to understand others has continued to help me deal more effectively with anger and resentment. President Brigham Young said, “I have learned that the greatest difficulty that exists in the little bickerings and strifes of man with man, woman with woman . . . arises from the want of rightly understanding each other.”¹ Seeking to understand the perspective of others will often help assuage feelings of anger.

The Healing Balm of the Atonement

Most of us will experience injustice or maltreatment in some form or other during our lifetime. But the Savior’s Atonement can redeem us not only from our own sins but also from the pain caused by the sins of other people. “And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam” (2 Nephi 9:21). If we meekly and humbly strive to be peaceful and forgiving, the Holy Ghost will enter our hearts, melt the pain of insults and injuries, and quench our resentment and desire for revenge. ■

NOTE

1. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 203.



Shunning Satan's Snares

BY ELDER JOSEPH T. HICKEN

Area Authority Seventy
North America Central Area

More than 40 years ago, a group of us were exploring the lava caves in northern California. We split into pairs and set a time to regroup again in the sunlight. With our flashlights off, the total darkness seemed almost overwhelming.

My partner and I ventured through small tunnels into caverns of various sizes until we heard the sound of running water. We worked through crevices and openings, fixated upon the sound, anxious to discover its source. Eventually we came to an opening through which only I could fit. We decided that I would wiggle through while he waited out my adventure and anticipated the report on what we thought to be a good-sized stream.

After a few more tight squeezes between small chambers, I could hear the water clearly. It seemed to be just beyond the low, horizontal opening ahead of me. On my stomach, with my arms outstretched, I pushed further toward the enticing goal.

Suddenly there was nothing under my hands but air. I could hear the water running directly below the cliff over which my hands and forearms now hung. I managed to flick a small stone off the edge and listened intently until the *plink* let me know there was a significant drop to the bottom. Now to report my finding to my friend.

However, as a result of my determination to get where I was, I had not considered the



The Book of Mormon teaches clearly what we must do to recognize and to overcome the temptations and snares of the evil one.



consequences. Not only was I in a narrow space, but the stone above sloped downward in such a way that I had wedged myself progressively tighter as I thrust forward while flat on my stomach. Without anything to push against with my hands, and with nothing in the loose lava soil for my feet to pull against, I was really stuck. Calling for help was not an option—my body filled the access space, my companion couldn't get through the openings, and no one else would know which path I had taken to get to where I now was. Only Heavenly Father could get me out of this mess.

After sincere prayer, I felt impressed to not give in to panic and to keep doing the only thing I could do: dig around with my toes for something stable enough to pull me backwards. With significant time, lots of prayer, and hard work, I finally was able to dig my toes in farther and inch backward until I could also use my hands. Once free, I felt an immediate sense of relief and gratitude accompanied by a profound assurance that Heavenly Father knew and cared for me.

Avoiding the Adversary's Traps

Just as I became trapped in the rock so many years ago, many individuals become trapped by the adversary. They are beckoned by something that entices them to ignore the safety of proper companionship, to want something without weighing the

consequences, and to forget that they really know better.

The Book of Mormon reveals the Savior's plan for obtaining peace, salvation, and exaltation. In these same scriptures, Satan's plan to deter us from happiness is also exposed. He strives to have us trapped "in misery, like unto himself" (2 Nephi 9:9).




We are counseled to pray sincerely so that the Spirit of the Lord can guide us in making righteous choices.

King Benjamin taught that we must think through what we choose to do and consider the consequences of our choices if we are to avoid the grasp of the devil. He stated:

"I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are . . . so many that I cannot number them.

"But . . . if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith . . . ye must perish" (Mosiah 4:29–30).

In order to perish, we must allow the devil to work his plan in our lives. In order to



prosper in the plan of happiness, we must “remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ” (Helaman 5:9).

Whether we like it or not, our choices and their consequences are inseparably connected. We are free to choose; however, the results of our choices also will be ours (see Alma 42:26–28).

Prevailing over the Devil’s Strategies

To prevail over the devil’s strategies and temptations, we are counseled to pray sincerely (see Helaman 3:27), to remember what we have been taught (see Helaman 5:6–10), and to “lay hold upon the word of God” (Helaman 3:29). Doing this, we can “divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil” and stay above “that everlasting gulf of misery which is prepared to engulf the wicked” (v. 29).

As Helaman told his sons, repentance frees us from the sins that produce a seemingly trapped condition (see Helaman 5:10–11). Helaman taught his sons to build “upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, . . . which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall.” Then, he said, the devil “shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo” (Helaman 5:12).

Helaman taught his sons well. A critical lesson for us to learn is that “they did remember [their father’s] words; and therefore they went forth, keeping the commandments of God” (Helaman 5:14). To fortify themselves against the temptations of the devil, they and other humble members of the Church “did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their

yielding their hearts unto God” (Helaman 3:35).

Let us be wise as we pursue life’s adventures. The Book of Mormon teaches clearly what we must do to recognize and to overcome the temptations and snares of the evil one.

Through the grace of God, the devil’s strategies to defeat us will fail as we commit to the Savior and follow His gospel. ■



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Using items in your home such as chairs and blankets, create a tunnel or “cave” that becomes smaller and narrower. Let family members crawl through it. Relate Elder Hicken’s cave experience and discuss how it relates to being trapped in Satan’s snares.
2. As you read the first four paragraphs together, invite family members to list the decisions Elder Hicken made that led him to the cliff’s edge. Share an experience when a single decision led to a series of events with either good or bad consequences. How do we make correct choices? Testify of the importance of striving to make right choices.
3. Invite each family member to explain a scripture used in this article. How can the truths in these verses help us overcome Satan’s snares? Share an experience or testimony about a time when one of these principles helped you prevail over Satan’s traps.



Finding Freedom

NAME WITHHELD

After hopeless years on the streets, I realized the Lord could help me escape my collapsing world.

From the backseat of a Florida police car, I watched the chaos that surrounded me. The police were still in pursuit of my partner. Sirens blared and lights flashed. A reporter looked in my window and tried to get a picture of me. Everything seemed like a movie—but it was real.

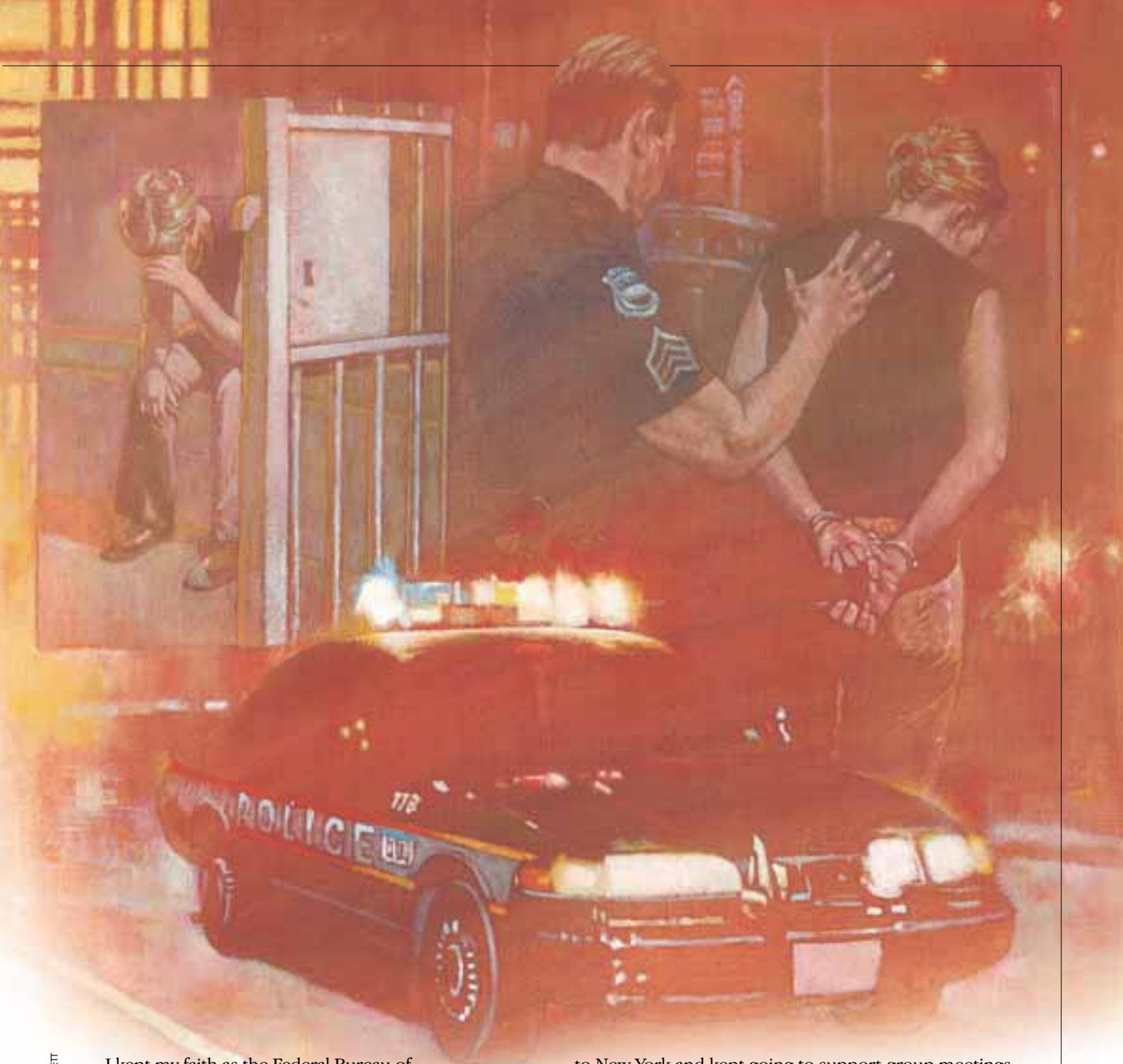
Years before, as a young woman, I had surrendered to life on the streets, and in my heart I had told myself I would die out there. In my twisted thinking I had even imagined that I would meet an infamous, dramatic end. But now I was on my way to jail.

Something was happening inside of me, though, something I hadn't hoped for or even considered for years. As I sat looking out at the dark reality of my world and all the turmoil I had helped to create, I realized I was being given a chance to turn away from the ugliness around me. Something was speaking to my soul, letting me know that this old book of my life could close and that I could open a new one. I sensed that it was up to me what I would write on these fresh, clean pages. As the police car pulled away, I made a silent vow that I would write only good things in my new book. Somehow God had spoken to my soul—it was clear and real. I knew it was Him. This was my chance to leave the streets, the drugs, and the crime behind and become a better person.

Discovering the Bible

Locked up, I shared a cell with a woman who was seriously ill—she couldn't walk by herself, and she was having a hard time seeing. I would wake up and help her get her night medications. The nurses kept telling us that her sickness wasn't worth worrying about, but we both knew differently. As I helped my cellmate, we became close friends, and she introduced me to the Bible. I would read to her from its pages, filling our nights and our souls. I often thought about my childhood and my years spent going to a religious school. I couldn't recall ever having a Bible handed to me or read to me, not even in church; it seemed the scriptures had always been paraphrased. So when I read the Bible for myself, my heart was ready for its powerful words.

My soul rejoiced in my newfound awareness of God and Jesus Christ. I found comfort in Psalms and read Psalm 23 until I had it memorized. I didn't just read it, though; I felt and pondered each word. I remember coming to the part that says, "thou anointest my head with oil" (v. 5) and wondering what that meant. I had a lot of questions. I would go to church in jail and relish the chance to sing hymns. My soul would soar as my voice reached up to the heavens, even through the bars. And I continued to help and read to my cellmate—which was a blessing for both of us—until she was taken to a hospital.



ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT T. BARRETT

I kept my faith as the Federal Bureau of Investigation mandated that I complete my time at a drug rehabilitation center. I grew a lot there, grateful always for freedom and a new chance. I went to Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous groups and found that God was in the 12 steps of overcoming addictions. I loved putting my trust in the Lord—it felt so right and good.

“Where Could I Go?”

I was able to work and pay back the money I owed to the government, and a year later, I was released. I moved

to New York and kept going to support-group meetings, but I soon felt a desire to have the fellowship of a church and the opportunity to learn more about the principles of Jesus’ gospel. I wanted to come closer to God and Jesus Christ, but where could I go? What church would take me? My landlord suggested his church, but every Sunday he somehow wasn’t around to take me or could never quite remember the address. I finally decided to look in the phone book for churches in the area.

As I scanned the pages, I came across the words “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” At that



moment, it felt as though my heart stopped. My mind raced back to times I had seen this name before. I remembered how I used to feel when I would watch commercials on television produced by this church. I had always wanted the love and family unity they portrayed. I also remembered one night when I was living in Las Vegas years before and, with the noise of the worldly city behind me, had stood on a balcony and looked out at the Latter-day Saint temple. I had felt an overwhelming sense of peace as my soul stood at attention and feasted upon the wonder of this white edifice glowing in the desert. Because of this experience, I envisioned the Latter-day Saints as being a wholesome, beautiful people. But even though I felt drawn to their temple, I never let myself believe I

could be a part of their church. At that time, I had given up hope that I would ever find a way out of my fast-paced, empty world.

And now as I stared at the name before me in the Yellow Pages, I again longed to partake of the happiness and peace I was envisioning. This church seemed to be everything I had always wanted. I decided I would disguise myself in church clothes and sneak into a meeting. I would try to blend in as best I could, and if someone spotted me as a non-member, I would just beg them to let me stay. I looked at the address and found that the church was in Long Island. It was far away and I didn't know how I would get there, but I found such comfort in my plan to sneak in that I knew I needed to go.

Finding Peace and Joy



President Gordon B. Hinckley

“When I discuss faith, I do not mean it in an abstract sense. I mean it as a living, vital force with recognition of God as our Father and Jesus Christ as our Savior. When we accept this basic premise, there will come an acceptance of their teachings and an obedience which will bring peace and joy” (“With All Thy Getting Get Understanding,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1988, 5).



President James E. Faust

Second Counselor in the First Presidency
“What is the cost of discipleship? It is primarily obedience. It is the forsaking of many things. But since everything

The missionaries taught and baptized me. The following year I received my temple endowment. The first time I received a healing blessing, the Spirit witnessed to me again that this is the Lord's Church.

Coming Home

The Lord, however, had a different plan for me. Later that week as I was watching television, a Church commercial came on that brought back that same feeling of comfort and peace. The commercial ended by offering a free copy of the video *On the Way Home*. I copied the number off the screen and dialed right then and there, with my heart pounding. The person on the other end of the line asked if she could send representatives of the Church to visit with me. I told her my schedule, and a week later I opened my door to two elders. I felt that I had finally come home as I listened to them.

I learned that members of the Church in my area met at a storefront only a few miles from my house. I attended church and was warmly welcomed by the branch members. I completed the discussions, and a short time later,

I was baptized. The following year, with the help and support of loving friends and missionaries, I received my endowment in the temple.

The first time I was anointed with oil and received a healing blessing from Mechizedek Priesthood holders, I finally understood the meaning of the phrase in Psalm 23 "thou anointest my head with oil" (v. 5), and the Spirit witnessed to me again that this is the Lord's Church. He has filled me with His love, and "my cup runneth over" (v. 5). "Surely goodness and mercy" (v. 6) have followed me, as I am now able to enter into the house of the Lord and be together with other members of His Church, growing and learning in all that is good. I look out at the world today and know that "the Lord is my shepherd" (v. 1) and that He is helping me make my life into something beautiful. ■

in life has a price, it is a price worth paying, considering that the great promise of the Savior is for peace in this life and eternal life in the life to come" ("The Price of Discipleship," *Ensign*, Apr. 1999, 4).



President Boyd K. Packer

Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

"The gospel teaches us that relief from torment

and guilt can be earned through repentance. Save for those few who defect to perdition . . . , there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no offense exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness" ("The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 19).



Elder L. Tom Perry

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

"I know that the only lasting joy and happiness we will ever find during our mortal experience will come by

following the Savior, obeying His law, and keeping His commandments. He lives" ("Special Witnesses of Christ," *Ensign*, Apr. 2001, 11).



Elder Richard G. Scott

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

"When you trust in the Lord, when you are willing to let your heart and your mind be centered in His

will, when you ask to be led by the Spirit to do His will, you are assured of the greatest happiness along the way and the most fulfilling attainment from this mortal experience" ("Finding Joy in Life," *Ensign*, May 1996, 25).



Elder M. Russell Ballard

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

"The everlasting peace Jesus promises is an inner peace, born in faith,

anchored by testimony, nurtured with love, and expressed through continual obedience

and repentance. It is a peace of spirit that echoes through the heart and the soul. If one truly knows and experiences this inner peace, there is no fear from worldly disharmony or discord. One knows deep down inside that all is well as far as the things that really matter are concerned" ("The Peaceable Things of the Kingdom," *Ensign*, May 2002, 87).



Elder Robert D. Hales

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

"Once we receive a witness of the Spirit, our testimony is strengthened through study, prayer, and

living the gospel. Our growing testimony brings us increased faith in Jesus Christ and His plan of happiness. We are motivated to repent and obey the commandments, which, with a mighty change of heart, leads to our conversion. And our conversion brings divine forgiveness, healing, joy, and the desire to bear our witness to others" ("Receiving a Testimony of the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 30). ■

FEAST UPON THE WORDS OF CHRIST

BY ELDER SPENCER J. CONDIE
Of the Seventy

As Nephi concluded his sacred record, he left us a wonderful, comprehensive promise that when we “feast upon the words of Christ . . . , the words of Christ will tell [us] all things what [we] should do” (2 Nephi 32:3). This is a very bold promise. Can we really receive divine direction in all things?

In the first chapter of the Book of Mormon, Nephi tells how his father, Lehi, beheld a vision. In that vision, an angel gave Lehi a sacred book, and “as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord” (1 Nephi 1:12). When we search the scriptures, individually or as families, our hearts and minds are filled with the Spirit of the Lord. With that Spirit, we can indeed find the direction we seek within the pages of the standard works.

Let us put Nephi’s promise to the test



When we search the scriptures, individually or as families, our hearts and minds are filled with the Spirit of the Lord.

and see how the words of Christ can help us resolve four common concerns:

1. I sometimes feel overwhelmed by the burdens that weigh upon me. Why must I suffer so much adversity in my life?

Adversity is the common lot of all who come to earth. When we search the scriptures, we learn about the meaning of adversity. We also find reassurance that we are not left without help in facing the challenges of adversity.

In 2 Nephi 2:11, we learn that “it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things.”

As we study the verses preceding and following this one, we learn that Lehi is teaching his son Jacob about the plan of salvation. Essential to this plan is moral agency, or the freedom “to act for [ourselves] and not to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:26). Adversity is a necessary component of the great plan of happiness, for without opposition,



“righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad” (2 Nephi 2:11).

Adversity presents us with the opportunity to use our agency. And as we use it wisely, the Lord can refine us and eventually exalt us.

While imprisoned in Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith asked the Lord how long he must endure persecution and affliction. The Lord answered, “My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high” (D&C 121:7–8).

But although adversity is a necessary part of our mortal experience, we need not endure it alone. A search of the Book of Mormon reveals the Lord’s promise to those who had been baptized by Alma and who were being subjected to great afflictions:



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN LUKE

We can find the direction we seek within the pages of the scriptures.

“Lift up your heads and be of good comfort, for I know of the covenant which ye have made unto me. . . .

“And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs. . . .

“And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord” (Mosiah 24:13–15).

The Lord does not leave us comfortless in times of trial (see John 14:18).

2. One of our children is starting to stray from the Church. What can we do to bring our child back?

This is surely one of the most difficult problems many people face. For this problem,

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN REES, EXCEPT AS NOTED

too, we find guidance in the words of Christ.

Section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants tells us that when those in our care make mistakes, we need to correct them gently and kindly—but specifically and before it is too late. And we need to increase our expressions of love. In verses 41 through 44, we read:

“No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

“By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

“Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

“That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.”

Betimes means “before it is too late.” There are different interpretations of the term *sharpness*. One meaning refers to “being in focus.” That is to say, when reproof is given, it should focus upon a specific problem, conveying to the person being corrected that he or she is still valued and loved, even though current behavior is not acceptable.

A great pattern of reproof with love is found in Alma’s counsel to his wayward son, Corianton (see Alma 39–42). Alma teaches the doctrine in a very powerful, understandable



Christ’s healing doctrines can comfort us during times of trial.

way, then lovingly reproves his son and admonishes him to “let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance” (Alma 42:29).

You will recall that Alma himself had been a wayward youth until an angel appeared unto him in response to the prayers of his father (see Mosiah 27:14). In teaching the Nephites the power of prayer, the Savior promised them that “whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you” (3 Nephi 18:20). The scriptures teach over and over that prayers really do make a difference.

3. Someone offended me greatly, and it is very hard for me to forgive him. What should I do?

The Lord has made it clear that the power to exercise judgment is His: “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (D&C 64:10).

That is a high standard. Some offenses are so serious that it is extremely difficult to forgive those who have harmed us. The Book of Mormon explains how we can obtain the spiritual strength to forgive:

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. . . .

“. . . Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ” (Moroni 7:45, 47–48).

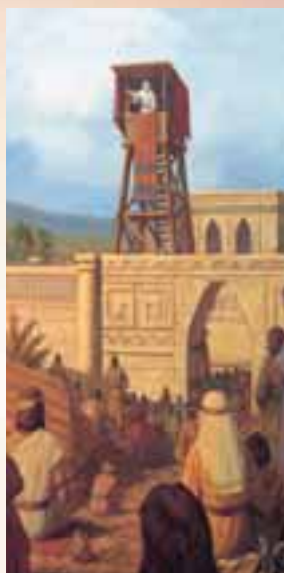
Love, including the power to forgive, is a divine gift. Earnest and energetic prayer can open the heart to receive that gift.

4. How can I know if and when I have been forgiven of my sins?

In Mosiah 4 and 5, King Benjamin discusses several signs that indicate when our sins have been forgiven. He had just given a powerful sermon to his people, and their hearts had been softened by his words; they viewed themselves in their carnal state and prayed that the atoning blood of Christ would make them clean again. After they had thus prayed, they were “filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins” (Mosiah 4:3).

Feeling joy is one indication that we are returning to the right path. Alma taught that “wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10). It is impossible to feel joy and sorrow simultaneously, so it is safe to assume that when our hearts are filled with joy we are in the process of overcoming wickedness.

A second sign that King Benjamin’s people had received a remission of sins was that they had peace of conscience



In his great sermon King Benjamin describes several signs that indicate when our sins have been forgiven.

(see Mosiah 4:3). We may not forget all our sins, but if we have truly repented, we will remember them with a peaceful conscience and be “harrowed up by the memory of [our] sins no more” (Alma 36:19).

Third, when we repent we are filled with the love of God (see Mosiah 4:12). Hearts that are filled with love are full. There is no room for hatred, revenge, discouragement, or fear.

Fourth, we do not have “a mind to injure one another” or even to allow our children to “fight and quarrel one with another” (vv. 13–14).

A fifth sign is that we are inclined to impart of our substance to others in need (see vv. 16–21). The Savior lifted the burdens of others; we will desire to do the same.

A sixth mark of true repentance is that we have “no more disposition to do evil” (Mosiah 5:2).

The scriptures are a veritable banquet of insights and divine counsel. Let us feast at the table often. If we do, the Holy Spirit will fill our lives, helping us to be “nourished by the good word of God” and to remain “in the right way” (Moroni 6:4).

In reference to His own revealed words, the Savior declared:

“These words are not of men nor of man, but of me; . . .

“For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; . . .

“Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words” (D&C 18:34–36). ■

Putting Family First in Ukraine

Saints in Kharkov, Ukraine, work to strengthen their families despite many obstacles.

BY MARINA MIKHAILOVSKAYA AND BENJAMIN GAINES

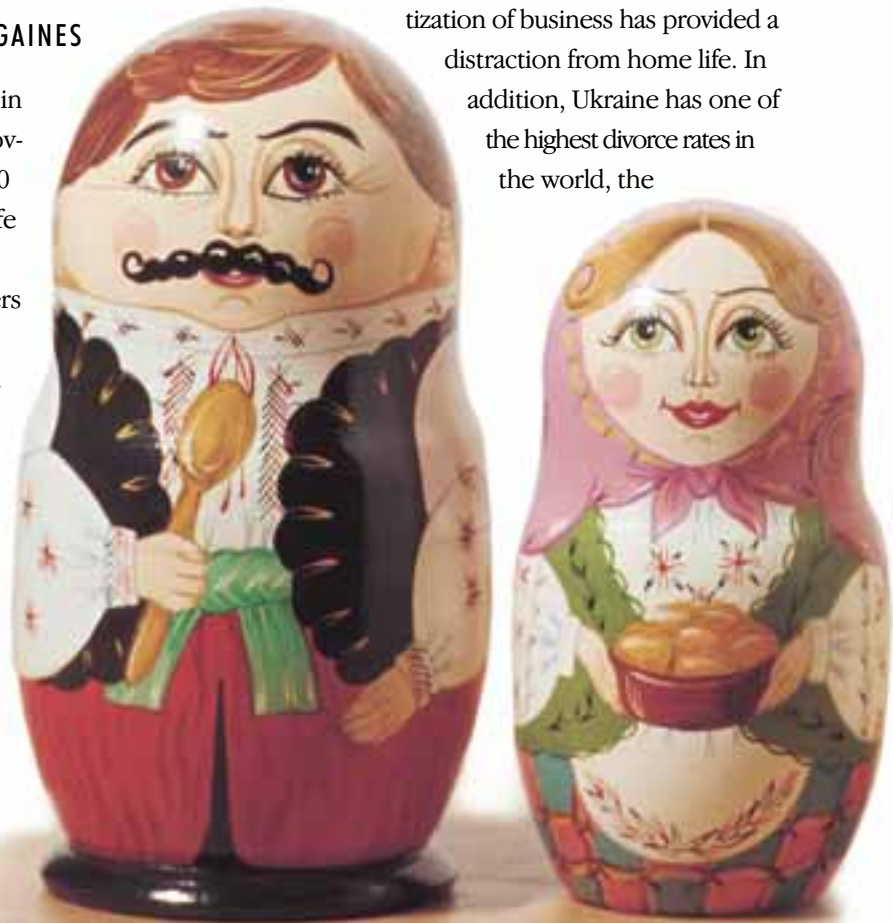
On the morning of 19 August 1991, families in Ukraine woke up to startling news: The government they had lived under for nearly 70 years had suddenly ceased to exist. In an instant, life changed forever.

Dmitry Mikulin from Kharkov, Ukraine, remembers well both that morning and the disorienting days that followed. “We went to sleep in one country and woke up in another,” he says. “Almost immediately, people began to experience real freedom in many facets of life.”

Many viewed the freedom to believe in God as a great blessing. Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles dedicated the land of Ukraine for the preaching of the restored gospel on 12 September 1991. A year later missionaries first came to Kharkov, Ukraine’s second largest city. And in January 1993, a branch was organized in the residential Alekseyevka area of town.

In his dedicatory prayer, Elder Packer asked “that the people [in Ukraine] will be blessed with food and clothing and shelter.” Obtaining these

necessities has been a challenge for most citizens of Ukraine. Many have had to work long hours at the expense of family time. For others, the opportunity to grow rich through privatization of business has provided a distraction from home life. In addition, Ukraine has one of the highest divorce rates in the world, the



Left to right: the Mikulin, Chervyakov, and Yemtsov families are helping to make family a priority in Ukraine.





number of out-of-wedlock births is increasing, and more couples are choosing to have one child or to remain childless. Somehow, for many citizens of Ukraine, the family has seemed to lose much of its significance.

But Latter-day Saints in Kharkov say the Church has helped restore their faith in the family. Dmitry, a returned missionary who recently moved from Kharkov to Moscow and now serves as second counselor in the Russia Moscow South Mission presidency, is one of these valiant Saints. He was sealed to his mother and father in the Freiberg Germany Temple in April 2000 and to his wife, Viktoriya, in the Stockholm Sweden Temple in August 2003.

“When we heard of the restored gospel, it gave us hope, a strong foundation, and faith in eternal life for our family,” he says. “Those problems that once seemed important became insignificant. Priorities in the family changed; values and the feelings of confidence and protection appeared.”

Dmitry’s father, Sergey, is currently Kharkov district president. He adds, “Our Church is the only place where people learn the truth about the family.”

Because of this fact, members of the Alekseyevka Branch are committed to building on eternal principles to strengthen families, not just their own but also other families who are striving to be in the world but not of the world (see John 17:11–14). The “family first” attitude has helped many here to achieve happiness in home life despite those distractions inherent in modern Ukraine. For Saints in Alekseyevka, the family and eternal goals permeate everything they do.

Stand Ye in Holy Places

Vitaly Yemtsov served in the Soviet army on the East German side of the Berlin Wall in 1988. “I had a normal childhood,” Brother Yemtsov says, “but when I lived in Germany, I saw how families suffered under a foreign government. I felt bad for them. Soldiers often treated them harshly. After that experience, I wanted to have a better family life than those I saw, better even than the family in which I grew up.”

After his service in the army, Vitaly Yemtsov and a childhood friend became dissatisfied with the spiritual emptiness they felt and dedicated themselves to finding the truth. Both quickly accepted the restored gospel just months after the Church was introduced in Kharkov. “When I met the missionaries, I finally found spiritual food, especially for the family,” he says. “I found what is lacking all around us.”

However, faith does not free Brother Yemtsov and his wife, Lyudmila, from the family-threatening pressures and challenges of life. Within 18 months, both left well-paying jobs that required too much sacrifice of family time. Both found new jobs offering comparable salaries. Even so, everyday life often makes it difficult to focus on the family. Brother Yemtsov works nine hours a day, six days a week painting and repairing cars. Sister Yemtsova until recently worked as a warehouse manager. She now works at a care center for the elderly. In addition, Vitaly serves as branch president and as an institute teacher, and Lyudmila is district Young Women president.

Like others in their country, the Yemtsovs continually face challenges stemming from influences that subtly work against the family. Brother Yemtsov often feels isolated at work as the only employee who neither smokes nor drinks. “Everyone was surprised when I told them that I don’t do any of that,” he says. “Some considered me crazy in the beginning. Most respect me for it though.”

Alcoholism is a serious problem in Ukraine; some people do not know anyone who does not drink. Smoking is almost as widespread, especially among youth. Pornographic images are visible on advertisements and are for sale on almost any street corner.

“There is temptation everywhere,” says Sister Yemtsova. “Satan works diligently here. But the Spirit works diligently

too. We find that it is not just how much time we spend together as a family but also what we do during that time that is important. And we make it a priority to do things that strengthen our bond.” For example, they say that family prayer and scripture study have become crucial, daily reminders of the importance of family happiness.

“The Lord said, ‘Stand ye in holy places,’ ” says Brother Yemtsov (D&C 87:8). “We try to make our home our own holy place so time spent together here will bring us closer.”

Choosing What Is Important

If he so chose, Aleksandr Chervyakov could have it all materially. Nine years ago he founded his own food technology company. Clients come from all over Ukraine and even Russia to take advantage of his firm’s services. “Without the Church, I could have easily become one of those people who works all the time and earns more than enough money but lacks the blessings of a loving eternal family,” Brother Chervyakov admits.

Fortunately, when two young missionaries asked if he would like to know more about Jesus Christ, he said yes. He and his wife, Lyudmila, and daughter, Inna, were baptized in 1995. Since then he has reduced his time at work so that he can nurture relationships within his family as well as serve in the Church. He has been the branch president and is currently second counselor in the branch presidency. The Chervyakovs were sealed in the temple in August 1997.

“One thing that has helped us keep our priorities in order has been family home evening,” says Aleksandr. “It’s so easy to forget what is truly important. Monday nights provide a great opportunity to forget about everything that is not important and to concentrate on our family.”

He says of their family home evening activities: “We always read from the scriptures or from the *Liabona*. If there

are any family-related issues, we discuss them. Right now the question is, Which university will Inna enter when she graduates next year? We have been discussing that a lot lately. And we have fun. I think it’s a great secret of life that being with one’s family is fun. Sometimes we even dance.”

Sharing the Truth

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: “We believe that the family is the basic unit of society. You can’t have a strong community without strong families. You can’t have

a strong nation without strong families—the father, the mother, the children as one unit working together. Now the family is falling apart all over America, all over the world. If we can just cultivate good, wholesome family life among our members, I don’t worry very much about the future of this Church.”¹

Unfortunately, many families are struggling. However, there is tremendous hope because of the dedication of the Saints. Few people in Ukraine know the eternal principles that lead to happiness in the family, but the number is growing. As members live these teachings, their friends and family notice. Opportunities are abundant to share the peace members experience at home because of their diligence in establishing a house of God.

President Hinckley noted: “If we live the gospel, people will come into the Church. They will see the virtue of our lives, and they will be attracted to the message we have to teach. That message places great emphasis on the family.”² And it is a message the Saints in Kharkov have embraced. ■

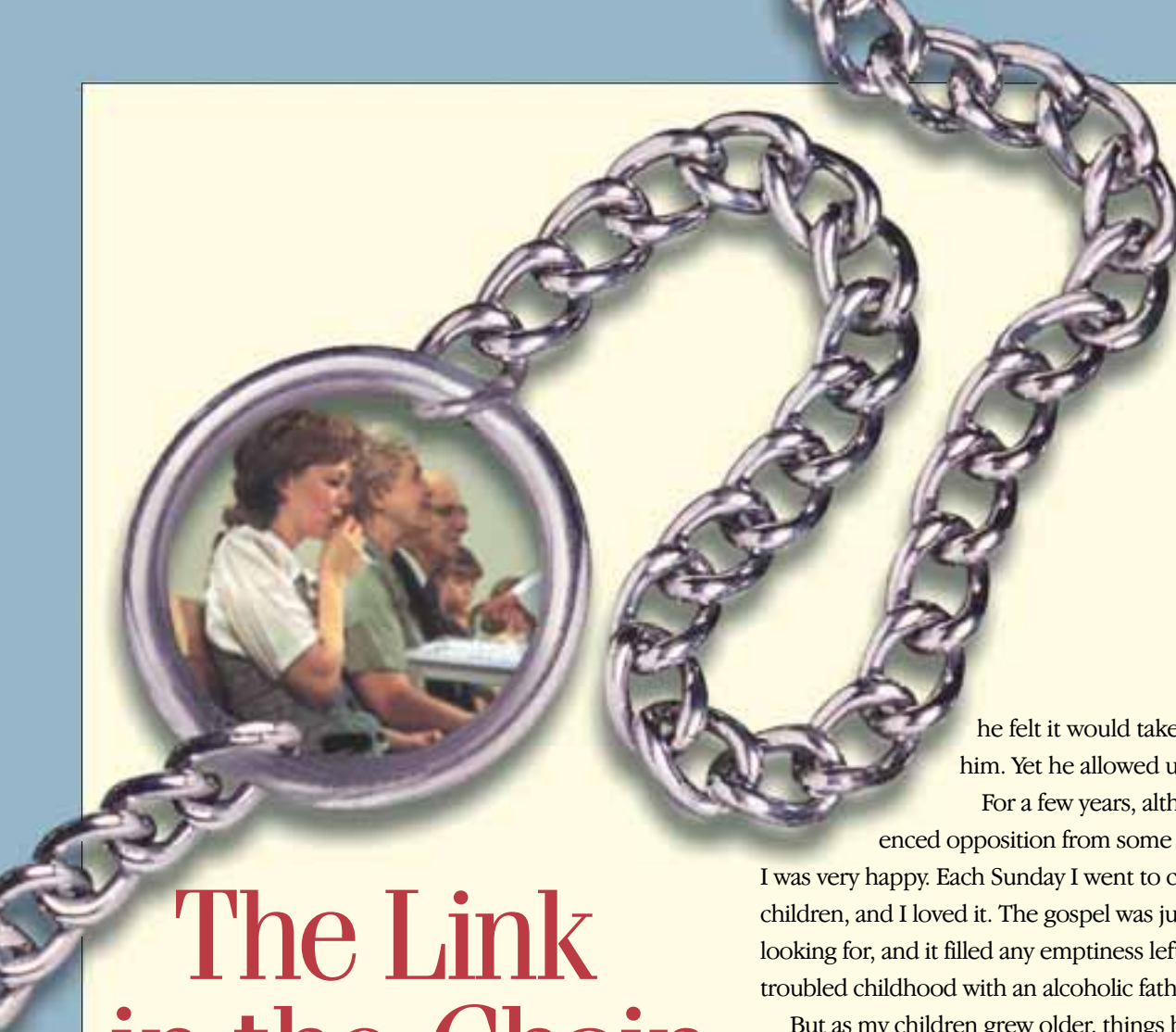
Marina Mikhbailovskaya is a member of the Alekseyevka Branch, Kharkov Ukraine District. Benjamin Gaines is a member of the Belmont First Ward, Cambridge Massachusetts Stake.

NOTES

1. From an interview with Ignacio Carrión, *El País*, 7 Nov. 1997; quoted in “Family Home Evening,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Mar. 2003, 5.
2. Quoted in *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Mar. 2003, 5.



The Alekseyevka Branch



The Link in the Chain

When my children chose not to attend church with me, it broke my heart, and I wondered if I could continue my own Church activity.

BY EVA FRY

In 1970 I joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I was well prepared: I did not use alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or drink tea or coffee. I had quit all those things when I realized it was time for me to change my life and find a church where I could take my children.

My conversion had begun after my sister-in-law developed a favorable opinion of the Church and arranged for me to receive the Church magazines. I later read the Book of Mormon, and I recognized its truthfulness. My three children and I were baptized shortly thereafter. My husband was not keen on this new life his family was living, because

he felt it would take us away from him. Yet he allowed us to attend.

For a few years, although I experienced opposition from some family members, I was very happy. Each Sunday I went to church with my children, and I loved it. The gospel was just what I was looking for, and it filled any emptiness left over from my troubled childhood with an alcoholic father.

But as my children grew older, things began to change. They wanted to be boating with their dad on Sundays rather than sitting in meetings. All of a sudden I found myself going to church alone. I was hurt. I would drive to church, sit by myself, cry, and go back home again.

Finally I told my stake president I was going to quit attending church because it was breaking up my family. He counseled me to ask Heavenly Father if that was what He wanted me to do. I accordingly went home to fast and pray, and I received my answer. My mind was impressed with the following words: "You are the link in the chain. If you break the link, everything will be lost." These words sank deep into my heart, and I made a commitment that I would continue my activity in the Church.

It was hard for me to go alone because I was very shy, and I realized my children had been my security blanket. Once again, I took my problem to the Lord. This time I felt impressed to draw closer to my ward family. So I would go to church, look for someone else who was alone, and force myself to speak to that person. Over the years my fear has left me, and now I have many friends in my ward.

KEEP THE CHAIN UNBROKEN



"I thought of an experience I had long, long ago. In the summer we lived on a farm. We had a little old tractor. There was a dead tree I wished to pull. I

fastened one end of a chain to the tractor and the other end to the tree. As the tractor began to move, the tree shook a little, and then the chain broke.

"I looked at that broken link and wondered how it could have given way. I went to the hardware store and bought a repair link. I put it together again, but it was an awkward and ugly connection. The chain was never, never the same.

"As I sat . . . pondering these things, I said to myself, 'Never permit yourself to become a weak link in the chain of your generations.' It is so important that we pass on without a blemish our inheritance of body and brain and, if you please, faith and virtue untarnished to the generations who will come after us.

"You young men and you young women, most of you will marry and have children. Your children will have children, as will the children who come after them. Life is a great chain of generations that we in the Church believe must be linked together."

President Gordon B. Hinckley, "Keep the Chain Unbroken," in *Brigham Young University 1999–2000 Speeches* (2000), 108–9.

My commitment to faithfully attend church has also paid off. One by one my children have returned to the Church, and all three are active. They are raising my nine grandchildren in the gospel, and each one is walking in righteousness.

My mother and sister have been converted also. My sister's husband is a bishop, and two of her children have served missions. My son also served a mission, and a grandson is currently serving. Our family is very close, and although my husband has not yet joined the Church, he has grown in many ways.

I thank Heavenly Father every day for my blessings and for the happiness and joy I experience in my family. I am so grateful I took to heart the answer to my prayer: "You are the link in the chain." ■

Eva Fry is a member of the Valley Center First Ward, Escondido California Stake.



Family Home Evening SUGGESTION BOX



These once-in-a-while ideas for family home evening can add variety to your Monday nights.

Like most of us, Matthew and Judy Morrise of the West Hills Ward, Beaverton Oregon Stake, are always looking for new ideas for family home evening lessons and activities. The *Family Home Evening Resource Book* (item no. 31106) is the mainstay, but other ideas are also welcome. While looking through the resource book, Judy Morrise came across an idea calling for the use of a suggestion box.

“This seemed like a good way to find out how our children felt about family home evening,” says Sister Morrise. “I made the box and placed it on a shelf where I knew the children would see it. Imagine my delight when after a few days I found notes from my six-year-old and eight-year-old daughters. They wanted to use the family home evening ideas they saw monthly in the *Friend* magazine. We gave it a try, and within the next two months each girl gave a short lesson that included an opening song, scripture references, a story, and an activity. Of course, we ended with treats.”

The suggestion box worked for the Morrises. Following is a “suggestion box” for you, full of family home evening ideas and testimonies gathered from readers. As you read these suggestions, choose some that best fit your situation and give them a try.

Feast upon the Scriptures

The scriptures are a ready source of family home evening lessons. When Sister Fortunata Mandalari of the Reggio Calabria Branch, Calabria Italy District, took a vacation to visit her daughter’s family, she turned to the scriptures for a family home evening lesson.

“I prepared a piece of paper for each of the seven family members,” she says, “and I wrote on it: ‘For the next family home evening, come prepared with your favorite scripture and a comment. You will have five minutes.’”

“On Monday, when we sat down at the table, there was already a peaceful feeling. I knew everything was going to go well. Each family member spoke of a different scripture, and everyone had a chance to speak up and learn from one another. We were so happy with this format that we used it for the remainder of my vacation.”

“After I returned home, my daughter told me that her family still enjoys this approach for family home evening. Everyone studies, speaks, and listens. There is no time for boredom.”

Pray for Inspiration

Susan Wolf, now of the Vashon Branch, Seattle Washington Stake, remembers when she received inspiration for a special family home evening. “We had just moved, and I was expecting a new baby,” says Sister Wolf. “With two preschoolers, I wanted to find a family home evening on the topic of preparing children for a new sibling. Nothing I read seemed quite right. So I prayed. My great desire was for our children to realize that having more children in our family did not equate to less love for them. And I wanted to emphasize that Jesus Christ is the source of all love. As I got up from my knees, an idea occurred to me.

“That Monday evening after singing and having an opening prayer, I handed each child a paper cup. I poured water into each cup and asked, ‘What happens if I run out of water?’ My son answered, ‘You go to the sink and fill up the pitcher, Mommy.’

“I explained, ‘We are going to have a new baby, and Mommy will be much busier. I won’t have as much time to play with you. But Mommy won’t run out of love for you. Do you know why?’

“This time my son and his three-year-old sister looked thoughtful but didn’t have an answer. I said, ‘I’ll just pray to Heavenly Father, and Jesus will fill up my heart with more love. So everyone in the family will have all the love they need.’ My children broke into happy smiles, as did my husband. The feelings in our hearts confirmed

the presence of the Holy Ghost bearing testimony of the truth that God is love.

“My daughter, now 23, recently repeated word for word this family home evening lesson of years ago. That was a testimony to me that even a very small child can be spiritually taught when love is the subject and Jesus Christ is the source.”

Write to the Missionaries

Even though she was 90 years old, Aletha Gilbert of the Lakeview Ward, Bountiful Utah Central Stake, loved to invite her family over for family home evening. Before her death in 2002, Aletha wrote of these special home evenings: “I make sure I have a supply of pens or pencils, writing paper, and envelopes. Sometimes I address the envelopes in advance. We each write a message to missionaries in the family and ward. What fun! Everyone likes this idea—the one who sends it and the one who receives it.”

Elder Nicholas D. Germer, who served in the Brazil Brasília Mission, has been on the receiving end of a family home evening activity.



Families can relax together as they write letters or prepare packages for missionaries.



Above: Family home evening can be a place where discussion and scripture study help resolve pressing questions. Right: Each of the Church magazines has suggestions on how specific articles can be used for a family home evening lesson.

When you hold family home evening week after week, lesson after lesson, some Monday evenings may seem like failures and others may exceed your greatest hopes. But it's consistency that is essential.

He writes: "I received three letters from members of a family that I knew before my mission. They wrote the letters during a family home evening, and the three-year-old daughter even got help from her father to write to me. I could feel their love and will never forget these letters."

Another family has a new idea for writing to missionaries. They spread out a large piece of paper. Then each family member takes a colored marker and writes a message in a circle, pattern, or other fun and interesting way. The young children frame off a section and draw a picture. Then they fold up the paper and mail it in a large envelope. Missionaries can hang this "banner" on their walls and enjoy it for weeks.

Draw upon Life Experiences

When your family shares an experience that results in gospel questions, family home evening can be a place where discussion and scripture study help resolve pressing questions.

During a family vacation, the Bart and LeAnne Dahneke family of the Grandview

Fifth Ward, Provo Utah Grandview Stake, shared an unusual experience.

"My husband and I decided to take our children for a walk along the beach in search of shells," says Sister Dahneke. "While walking we met a nice couple. Bart struck up a conversation with them, and we became quick friends.

"The next day we had dinner together and discovered that this couple was soon going to be married by a local minister. They had no family with them, so they invited us to serve as witnesses. We agreed.

"The wedding was held on a beautiful beach as the sun was setting over a calm, clear ocean. The bride and groom were radiant as they held hands and made the promise to love, honor, and respect each other. My children were happy for our new friends, but they had a lot of questions about the wedding ceremony. So our next family home evening was on eternal marriage.

"We talked about the importance of eternal marriage as found in D&C 132:15, 19. We taught our children about the importance of living their lives so they are worthy to go to the temple to be sealed for eternity. We felt the inspiration of the Holy Ghost as we talked about the beauty of a temple marriage and its eternal sealing power, compared to an earthly wedding and its 'until death do us part' promise.

"Drawing upon this shared experience provided a powerful foundation to teach the gospel principles surrounding eternal marriage. Our children were receptive because they had experienced firsthand the wedding on the beach. We were motivated because we know firsthand the joys of temple marriage. The result was a powerful family home evening."

Use Church Magazines

“You don’t have to be a child to enjoy the activities in the children’s section of the *Liabona*,” says Martha Mabel Martínez of the Caleta Olivia Ward, Comodoro Rivadavia Argentina Stake. “Our family consists of my father, my mother, and me—their grown daughter. It used to be very difficult for us to hold family home evening, but ever since we started using the children’s section, everything has improved—especially the good spirit we feel when we’re together. Sometimes other members of our family just happen to come by, and they participate too and are just as enthusiastic about family home evening as we are.”

Ideas for family home evening are found in all Church magazines—on page 1 of the *Liabona*, on the “Making the Most of This Issue” page in the *Ensign*, on the “What’s in It for You” page in the *New Era*, and on the “Guide to the *Friend*” page in the *Friend*. A family home evening can also be built around a subject from the topic index found in each Church magazine. Linked to each topic are stories or articles found in that issue. It is easy to read a story or article together and then discuss a particular topic.

Be Consistent

When you hold family home evening week after week, lesson after lesson, some Monday evenings may seem like failures and others may exceed your greatest hopes. But it’s consistency that is essential.

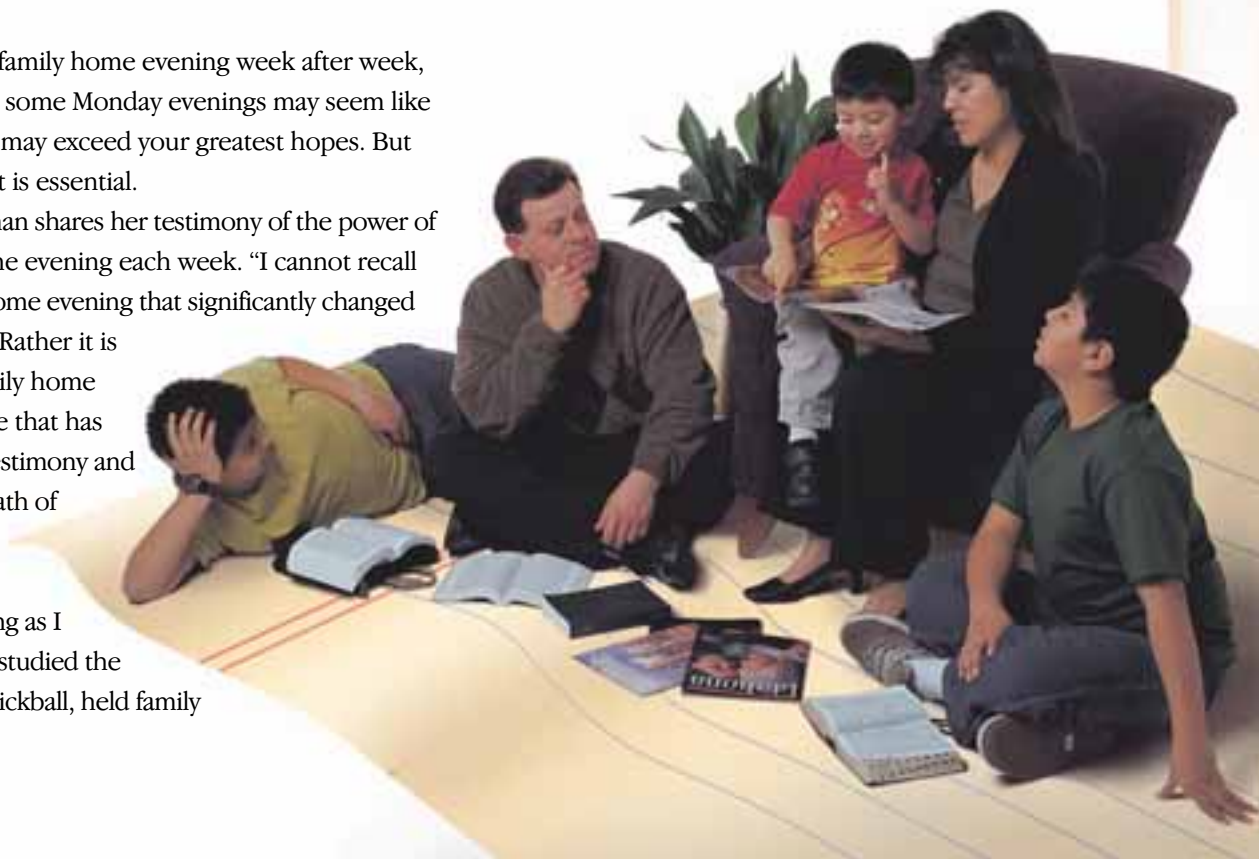
One young woman shares her testimony of the power of holding family home evening each week. “I cannot recall one single family home evening that significantly changed my life,” she says. “Rather it is my memory of family home evenings as a whole that has strengthened my testimony and led me down the path of truth. We spent each Monday night as a family for as long as I can remember. We studied the scriptures, played kickball, held family

councils, played games, and learned to love and respect one another despite our individual faults and weaknesses. My father eagerly tried to instill in us a love for the gospel and the happiness that could be ours if we obeyed the commandments.

“By the time I turned 14, I refused to go to church, but family home evenings continued. My father continued to have hope for me. Eventually family home evening became my only link to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I headed down the wrong path and made several mistakes, but somewhere deep inside my heart I knew that the gospel was true and that nothing I did could change that fact.

“At the age of 18, I knew I had to make a decision: Would I follow the Savior or would I follow the world? I could not serve two masters. I chose to follow the Lord and through repentance returned to full Church activity. I believe it was the determination of my father to continue to hold family home evening—even though I chafed against it—that made the difference.

“Now my husband and I hope to help instill a love of the Savior and His Church in our children through, of course, regular family home evening.” ■



BY MARIAN POND

I must admit I felt somewhat underwhelmed when I received a call to teach the CTR 6 class in my ward. I acknowledged there would be some challenges for me as I reviewed the class list of 11 lively, intelligent, and somewhat unruly little souls. To stay ahead of this group would require energy, creativity, and diligent preparation. I accepted the call with whole-hearted determination to give it my best and make a difference in the lives of these children. But I did not expect the experience to afford any opportunity for my own growth or development. That, I thought, I would need to take care of in my personal study.

With love for the Savior and a fervent desire to serve Him, I went forward with joy to teach His gospel. As time passed, the class steadily improved in behavior, attention, understanding, and participation. They were a delight to be with—bright, eager, happy little disciples of Christ. All, that is, but one—a little girl named Angie (name has been changed). And, oh, what a handful she was! She jabbed, pushed, patted, and kicked her neighbors, broke crayons, and tore papers. She raised her hand, then refused to talk or gave silly, irreverent answers. When I strategically placed her chair so that she had no neighbors, she babbled or

*Trying to reach
one disruptive
little girl taught
me what kind
of teacher
I was called
to be.*



THE UNEXPECTED LESSON

sang, making it next to impossible for me to teach. I managed to get through the stories and activities all right, but I recognized we did not have the Spirit with us in class. *I* did not have the Spirit with *me*.

Increasing the earnestness of my prayers and preparation, I pleaded with the Lord to help me reach this child—and not neglect the others in the process. Gradually my understanding of my calling expanded to include what I was called to *be* as well as what I was called to *do*. I realized it was not simply a call to teach the gospel. I had been called to represent the Savior in that little classroom. Somehow through me these precious children could come to know of His love and concern and preparations for them. I came to understand that through the way I interacted with Angie, she, as well as her classmates, would gain a feeling, good or bad, about the Savior and His Church. I now stretched to magnify every aspect of my calling.

I continued to prepare diligently for the lessons to be effective. Outwardly, nothing changed—we still had stories, played games, and colored—but inwardly my focus was on representing the Savior. I asked myself, “How would He look at this situation, or this child? What would

He say? What would He do?” When Angie acted up or said she wanted to go to her mother during opening



exercises, I showed her the things I had brought in my bag and told her what I had planned for class. More significantly, I sincerely expressed to her my hope that she would choose to stay and be part of our class-time activities. She always chose to stay and behaved so that she could. Gradually, our opening exercises and class time improved, but closing time still drained me completely. It seemed Angie had reached her limit by then and had had enough of sitting still and being quiet. Holding her on my lap was the only way I found I could restrain her, and even then it felt like a wrestling match. I held her close to me, sometimes firmly, whispering encouragement. “Just a little while longer,” I’d say. “It’s almost over.” And thus we endured weeks of closing exercises.

One day as I sat with Angie’s rigid and resisting body straining against my arms, a new thought entered my mind. Guided by a spiritual prompting, I whispered, “You don’t like it when our Primary ends, do you?” Tears welled up in my eyes as I felt the tension leave her small frame and she snuggled into my arms and shook her head in a wordless no.

Then, and for many closing exercises after that, I whispered assurances that we would come together every week. I promised her we would have stories and activities and we would learn more about Jesus, and I told her I would look forward to seeing her next time. Angie needed extra encouragement and attention, but her confidence and self-control grew steadily. CTR 6 thrived!

On the last Sunday of the year the children were gathered on blankets to listen to a story in sharing time. Angie reverently got up and came back to quietly ask me how to spell *church*, then went back to her place. I hadn’t even noticed she was writing, but she showed me her little journal as we walked to our classroom.

“Do you want to see what I wrote?” she smiled up at me, offering the pocket-sized book. I looked down to see “I ♥ CHURCH.” With my heart in my throat I breathed, “I’m so glad, Angie! I am so glad.”

I reflect on my thoughts when I accepted my calling. I did not expect the experience to offer opportunities for personal growth and development. But now I feel overwhelmed with gratitude for what the Lord taught me while I taught Primary. ■

Marian Pond is a member of the Berthoud Ward, Loveland Colorado Stake.



When I returned to Church activity, I worried whether other ward members would welcome me back.

Compassion for Those Who Struggle

Friendship and compassion can strengthen those dealing with same-sex attraction.

NAME WITHHELD

The inspiring account of Hannah in the Old Testament depicts the travails of one temporarily deprived of normal family relationships by her inability to bear a child. Mocked by her husband's other wife

“because the Lord had shut up her womb,” Hannah “was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore” (1 Samuel 1:6, 10). The footnote to this scripture explains that the phrase “bitterness of soul” means not anger or cynicism but sadness and grief.

There are those in the Church today who also feel a “bitterness of soul” because they do not fully experience the joys of family life.

This is not so because of infertility. Neither is it because they have not had a suitable opportunity to marry. They are unable as yet to have families of their own because of sexual orientation.

They are those brothers and sisters in the Church with same-sex attractions who are conscientiously striving to live the commandments. They are those who reject trendy beliefs that homosexuality is an acceptable lifestyle option. They are those who, recognizing we are not named by what tempts us, eschew the label “gay” to take upon them the name of Christ instead.

I am one of them.

Magnified through Endurance

For those of us facing this challenge, the only way to live a life of righteousness is to delay or go without something for which most human hearts hunger: the kind of partnership and completeness that is found in a marriage relationship. In the moments of searing loneliness this reality brings, I find compensating companionship in the enveloping arms of the Savior and His Atonement. During such times, the Savior’s words “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Corinthians 12:9) take on a profound new meaning.

It is a distressing duality to yearn to follow Christ and His teachings about marriage and family while being unable to do so because of inharmonious sexual attractions. When I despair I take comfort from what the Lord promises in Doctrine and Covenants 58:2–3:

“Blessed is he that keepeth my commandments, whether in life or in death; and he that is faithful in tribulation, the reward of the same is greater in the kingdom of heaven.

“Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation.”

Here I hope to explain through my experience the challenges and needs of many of the Church members enduring same-sex attraction, that perhaps increased understanding and compassion from friends, family, and

Church members will be a sustaining bulwark in our defenses against giving in to temptation.

The Choice Is in the Response, Not in the Temptation

It is not often that Saints with same-sex attraction make their challenge known to others. For me, this struggle is one only the Lord, my bishop, and a few close and understanding friends need to know.

However, at times family and ward or branch members will discern that one harbors these attractions. If others have such perceptions of me, I am grateful that in my Church associations I have never experienced jokes and gossip that make light of a struggle where a soul’s destiny hangs in the balance. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has stated, “Persons . . . struggling with the burden of same-sex attraction are in special need of the love and encouragement that is a clear responsibility of Church members.”¹

Ours is often a hidden conflict for fear of being seen as “deviants” who have chosen these attractions. For most Latter-day Saints who struggle with this challenge, nothing could be further from the truth. As one author has written: “Why would someone who has a strong conviction of the divine origins of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints choose to engage in a wrenching conflict with that testimony . . . ? Same-sex desires create a very difficult challenge for Church members and are seldom chosen. The trial befalls even the valiant ones.”² Our choice is in deciding whether to defy or succumb to temptation, not in whether to have the temptation itself.

Conversely, the doctrine of agency contradicts worldly attempts to justify homosexual behavior because of supposed biological or physiological causes. Elder Oaks said: “Once we have reached the age or condition of accountability, the claim ‘I was born that way’ does not excuse actions or thoughts that fail to conform to the commandments of God. We need to learn how to live so that a weakness that is mortal will not prevent us from achieving the goal that is eternal.”³

Surely He who asks rhetorically, “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14) can help us master same-sex attraction.

The Fears That Come with Repentance

When I first made the decision to repent of homosexual activity, I greatly feared how the bishop would react. Would he act disgusted or angry? Would I be made to feel worse than I already did over having sinned?

Anxious about disclosing such a personal struggle, I delayed the repentance process for many months. When I did finally meet with my bishop, instead of burdening me with more guilt, he beckoned me back to the fold with words as inviting as Alma’s: “If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?” (Alma 5:26). The bishop’s calm and spiritual reaction to my confession made it easier to go to him later on, knowing I would be loved and helped. His Christlike approach aided in my repentance.

Equal to my fears of going to the bishop were my feelings of unworthiness to be at church with people who were living good lives and had not indulged in the sins I had committed. I was sure the first Sunday I returned to church that everyone would see right into my soul and know what I was guilty of and the feelings I was struggling with.

Instead, my anxieties were put to rest when members of the ward welcomed me back with loving fellowship. Repentance would have been much more difficult if I had gone from being a less-active member to a less-included member of the ward.

Supportive and loving Latter-day Saint friends and family are vital in the repentance process. When I first sought such support from a few longtime friends by revealing my struggle, I worried they would reject me. Yet just as the Savior would never reject someone because of his or her temptations, neither have my friends abandoned me because of my weakness. If they ever felt disappointment in learning of my temptations and mistakes, they replaced those feelings with the kind of charity President Ezra Taft

Benson (1899–1994) described: “I have in my heart a love for all of God’s children. I have no ill feeling toward any human being. With you, *I hate sin, but I love the sinner*. We all have need to repent.”⁴

When I feel overwhelmed by my situation, I am truly blessed to have these friends who will listen and encourage. They strengthen my resolve to endure to the end. The words that comforted and uplifted the Prophet Joseph Smith also comfort and uplift me: “Thy friends do stand by thee, and they shall hail thee again with warm hearts and friendly hands” (D&C 121:9).

Temptation Is Not Transgression

Some assume that all those with same-sex tendencies are morally depraved. Yet, as I often have to remind myself, because of my repentance and my earnest efforts to live the commandments I am as worthy as other righteous Latter-day Saints to serve in callings and in the temple, to take the sacrament, to give talks and lessons in church, and to hold the priesthood. As President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has said, “If you do not act on temptations, you need feel no guilt.”⁵

Contrary to being morally deficient, many of us are developing spiritual muscles through the calisthenics of adversity.⁶ This is a fight that can forge a profound closeness with Heavenly Father and the Savior because victory hinges on our ability to rely on Them completely. For me, these words of the Savior have personal meaning: “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Matthew 9:12).

Some may be gripped by other temptations—alcohol, tobacco, pornography, gambling, or other serious sins. If not tempted by major transgression, we all nevertheless are tempted every day. And we do not think people facing large or small temptations are immoral just because they are tempted. Elder Oaks reminds us: “We should always distinguish between sinful *acts* and inappropriate *feelings* or potentially dangerous *susceptibilities*. We should reach out lovingly to those who are struggling to resist temptation.”⁷

I am blessed to associate with people who view me by my true character, not by superficial stereotypes. In doing so they follow the Savior's example: "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Regardless of the nature of our temptations, everyone must rely upon the Savior's Atonement to build the bridge that takes us back to our Father in Heaven. No one can do it alone.

The Individuality of Timing

One of the most uncomfortable moments I face as I work to overcome same-sex attraction is when a Church or family member queries as to why I am not yet married. Worse, however, is hearing the dreaded words "I have the perfect person for you to date."

For some, dating members of the opposite sex may be a welcome way to work past inappropriate attractions. For others like me,

Supportive
Latter-day
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have been a positive
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choices.



dating may not be comfortable just now. Pushing dating on me has the unintended consequence of aggravating the pain and frustration I may feel. I hope to one day sufficiently curb my attractions to make the first tenuous steps toward dating. But I have to be allowed to do so without others imposing either timetables or dating partners upon me.

Some may say that same-sex attraction can be “cured” simply through dating and marriage. But President Gordon B. Hinckley has dispelled this notion: “Marriage should not be viewed as a therapeutic step to solve problems such as homosexual inclinations or practices, which first should clearly be overcome with a firm and fixed determination never to slip into such practices again.”⁸

The ability of individuals with same-sex desires to date and marry depends on their progress made with the Lord’s help in overcoming these attractions—an effort that is neither easy nor quick. Your patience with this process will greatly magnify our own. Contrary to the impression given by the popular media, many individuals have successfully overcome their same-sex attractions.⁹ For others, this may be a lifelong test¹⁰ to prove their willingness to do as the Savior said—to “deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).

Helping Singles Avoid Solitude

Of greater value than matchmaking services of friends and Church members are the time and companionship many so freely offer. Married couples who embrace me within their social circles by including me in family home evenings or other activities help sustain me during periods of temptation and loneliness. They exemplify the Savior’s admonition to cast a wide net of inclusion:

“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

“And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?” (Matthew 5:46–47).

The most wrongheaded thought I occasionally experience is feeling left out of the Church’s teachings on family and marriage. Time spent interacting with families allows

me to feel I have a part in the doctrine on family. In sharing their time, families fulfill the decree of discipleship that we are to be “willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light” (Mosiah 18:8).

Time with righteous friends and their families also helps make the difference in my making correct choices. When I am feeling most alone is when I am most tempted to look for improper companionship. Associating instead with gospel-oriented families helps me choose the better course and gives me a taste of family blessings that someday can be mine through my faithfulness.

Sorrow Replaced by Joy

Whether you know or only sense that a righteous friend or family member is dealing with same-sex attraction, rest assured by virtue of his or her discipleship that he or she is not content to be facing these temptations. Please do not confuse temptation with transgression.

Our Father in Heaven and our Savior know our needs and can help those of us facing this challenge endure to the end. They accomplish this in part through true disciples who are willing to offer their time, understanding, and compassion. As we are thus strengthened in our righteous resolves and as we are obedient to the Savior’s teachings, our “bitterness of soul” will be replaced by joy and hope like that which Hannah felt when her prayers at last were answered (see 1 Samuel 2:1). We then will be better able to successfully meet the tests of this life and find our way home. ■

NOTES

1. “Same-Gender Attraction,” *Liabona*, Mar. 1996, 24; *Ensign*, Oct. 1995, 14.
2. Erin Eldridge, *Born That Way?* (1994), 33.
3. *Liabona*, Mar. 1996, 18; *Ensign*, Oct. 1995, 10.
4. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (1988), 75; emphasis added.
5. “Ye Are the Temple of God,” *Liabona*, Jan. 2001, 87; *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 74.
6. See Neal A. Maxwell, “Enduring Well,” *Liabona*, Apr. 1999, 12; *Ensign*, Apr. 1997, 8; see also “Becoming a Disciple,” *Ensign*, June 1996, 15.
7. *Liabona*, Mar. 1996, 21; *Ensign*, Oct. 1995, 12.
8. “Reverence and Morality,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 47.
9. See, for example, Robert L. Spitzer, “Can Some Gay Men and Lesbians Change Their Sexual Orientation? 200 Participants Reporting a Change from Homosexual to Heterosexual Orientation,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Oct. 2003, 403–17.
10. See Boyd K. Packer, *Liabona*, Jan. 2001, 87; *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 74.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Question

I am so busy with family, Church, and other activities that I don't often reach out to my neighbors who are not Latter-day Saints. What specific ideas can help me develop better relationships with my neighbors?

Our family tries to plan one night every month or every other month when we invite an individual or family to dinner. We have never yet been turned down; after all, everyone likes an invitation to enjoy a dinner he or she hasn't had to cook. These dinner get-togethers have been our favorite way to get to know neighbors individually. They bring hearts closer and increase neighborhood unity.

In addition, when the weather permits, we try to take walks as a family through our neighborhood. It is amazing how often this simple activity allows us the chance to meet or visit with neighbors. Many good associations have been formed and strengthened by just this one effort.

Lorraine Richardson, Springfield Fifth Ward, Eugene Oregon Stake

When our family moved into a new home, I knew I would have to make an extra effort to reach out to our new neighbors. Within a couple



of months of moving in, I made plates of cookies with cards that introduced our family and included our telephone number. Then I delivered the plates to each neighbor when I knew they were home.

I continue to deliver plates as new people move onto our street. After I meet them, I write down their names and telephone numbers (if they shared them) on a street map

I made. I can glance at this map to recall people's names and use the phone numbers in case of an emergency. The "name map" of our street is indispensable as we meet new faces over time. Through this, I can share treats, holiday or otherwise, with neighbors by name, since I have them written down at home.

Jennifer Mast, Dodge Center Branch, Rochester Minnesota Stake

I have found that when families in our neighborhood need service, it is a good idea to include members of our Church and those of other faiths. When one of our neighbors had a new baby, the Relief Society asked me to organize meals for the family. I asked a neighbor who is not of our faith to help, and she was delighted to be included. We have done the same when providing a meal after a funeral or at other times when a family may need a little help. Including our neighbors in this way increases neighborhood unity.

Loretta Evans, Boulevard Ward, Idaho Falls Idaho Taylor Mountain Stake

When there is even a slight lull in the schedule, we or one of our neighbors will often invite families on our street for an impromptu Saturday afternoon potluck dinner or pizza night. The adults bring out the lawn

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



We can plan to do outdoor activities such as yard work when we know our neighbors will likely be outside.

chairs and watch the children play while we eat and chat. Sometimes we haven't seen each other for weeks, so there is a lot to catch up on. Our children consider our neighbors an appendage to the family and look forward to each time we all get together.

Robyn Ellis, Fredericksburg Ward, Fredericksburg Virginia Stake

In the apartment complex where I live, tenants move in and out fairly frequently. Still, I try to remember names and to greet people by name when I see them. Also, if a two-for-one or buy-in-bulk bargain

gives me more groceries than I can use, I often will offer the surplus to a neighbor.

Anton Rytting, University First Ward, Columbus Ohio Stake

I try to be involved with my neighbors through community service. As a volunteer for a couple of local annual events, I offer my neighbors the opportunity to take part in whatever event I am working on at the time. I am usually equipped with flyers that tell about the event, and then I hand-write a note requesting their help in one of two or three areas. Whether it is a music concert or county fair time, there are many opportunities to serve. My neighbors smile when they see me coming now. They wonder what I'm up to next, and some even ask, "How can we help?"

B. Sparks Chowban, Manzanita Ward, Kingman Arizona Stake

Our family hosted a children's activity day in our home around Valentine's Day. We

made invitations for several families on our street and planned different crafts, games, and other fun activities. It turned out to be an easy way to have people in our home, and our neighbors were pleased to bring their children to an event organized just for them.

Laura Erasmus, McKenzie Ward, Calgary Alberta South Stake

If I have a need, at times I will ask a neighbor if I can borrow a cup of sugar or a rake. Sometimes I exchange house keys with neighbors in case of emergencies. My neighbors usually reciprocate quickly, and friendships develop naturally and easily.

We should not seek friendships with our neighbors for the sole purpose of converting them. Love, respect, sharing, caring, and serving should be the basis for our friendships. And somewhere in that special

When moving into a new home, we can bring a treat to our new neighbors rather than waiting for them to visit us.



relationship, often friends of another faith will show an interest in our faith. It is usually easy and comfortable to discuss our beliefs with good friends.

Elizabeth McCash, Millard Ward, Omaha Nebraska Stake

I am 81 years of age, and I live in a seven-story apartment building. I bake cookies and have taken some to several neighbors who live in my building. I also try to send get-well cards to people who are sick. Little things like this can make friends pretty fast.

Edith Glassburner, Emporia Ward, Derby Kansas Stake

Two years ago my mother-in-law, who lives nearby, and I hosted a neighborhood Christmas party for the 20 or so families who live along our rural road. After dinner, each family was given the opportunity to tell about themselves so we could become better acquainted. We felt a warmth in our hearts knowing we had helped strengthen the bonds of friendship among our neighbors.

Last Christmas we hosted the get-together again. As we delivered the invitations, we also left a *Joy to the World* video as a gift for each family.

Tamra Flake Kriser, Geneva Branch, Dothan Alabama Stake

Some years ago our stake mission presidency popularized the phrase “The Anyway Principle”—the idea being that if you are doing things anyway, why not invite someone to participate with you. For busy Church members trying to find ways of



PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE BUNDERSON

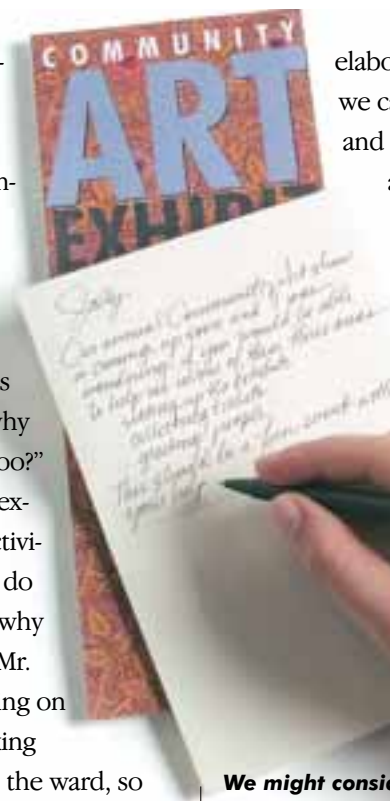
Planning block parties and neighborhood picnics is a good way to become better acquainted with neighbors.

reaching out to neighbors who are not Latter-day Saints, that could translate into simple things like “We’re having family home evening anyway, so why not invite the neighbors?” or “Suzy is going to Primary, so why not invite little Janie too?”

This could also be extended to everyday activities such as “I have to do yard work anyway, so why not find a time when Mr. Jones is outside working on his yard?” or “I’m making cookies for families in the ward, so why not take some to the neighbors?” and so on. To reach out to our neighbors, we do not always have to plan

elaborate activities. Rather, we can include our friends and neighbors in activities and plans already scheduled in our lives. ■

*Anna Hammari,
Tully Park Ward,
Meridian Idaho
West Stake*



We might consider inviting neighbors to participate with us in community events or volunteer work.

Our Secret Angels

By Mary Bartschi

For a couple of weeks I had been noticing a small tremor in my right hand. I persuaded myself it was only stress. Raising seven children can be a challenge, but when five of those children have multiple disabilities, life can be overwhelming at times. My schedule was filled with doctors' appointments,

therapies, daily medication routines, and the constant challenge of helping children struggle with seizures, mental retardation, bipolar disorder, and congenital heart disease.

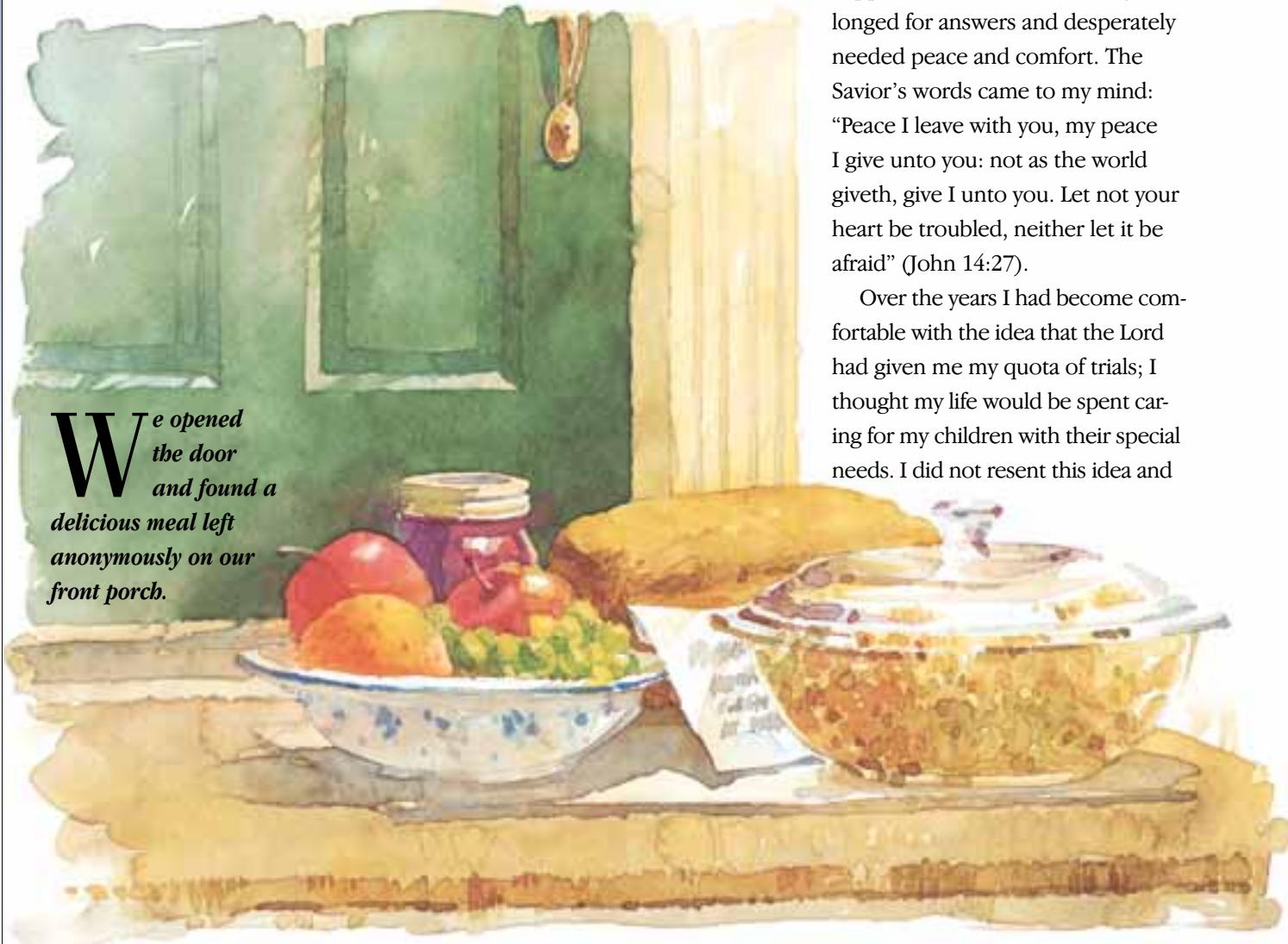
My husband, Ron, had recently been called as bishop of our ward. We were grateful for his opportunity to serve and prayed daily that he

would be able to bless the lives of those in our ward. Little did I realize that we would be the ones receiving the blessings.

Finally, I could ignore the tremor no more and sought medical help. As I left the doctor's office that day, my life had changed forever. Parkinson's disease was the diagnosis. Questions and fears flooded my mind. How would the disease progress? How would I care for my family? How would I continue to support Ron in his new calling? I longed for answers and desperately needed peace and comfort. The Savior's words came to my mind: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

Over the years I had become comfortable with the idea that the Lord had given me my quota of trials; I thought my life would be spent caring for my children with their special needs. I did not resent this idea and

We opened the door and found a delicious meal left anonymously on our front porch.



Courage to Pray

By Dalnei de Assunção de Castro

even felt great peace and joy as I looked to my future. We had accepted the challenges and disabilities of both our sons, along with raising our two beautiful daughters. We even felt the strong desire to add to our family by adopting three more children with special needs. Each time we entered the adoption process, we experienced miracles as we were guided through each step of the way. There have been tremendous challenges but also tremendous blessings.

In the weeks following my diagnosis I often found myself on my knees, pleading with the Lord. I learned that Parkinson's is a progressive disease and that I would continue to lose control of my muscles. The more I read, the more frightened I became. I spent many sleepless nights. I also felt an impression from the first words of the diagnosis that there would be no miracles to remove this trial from me and that I needed to learn something from this experience. I felt so alone and wondered if the Lord was displeased with me, if He still loved me.

Then one night, as Ron was getting ready to go to Mutual, there was a knock at our door. We opened the door and found a delicious meal left anonymously on our front porch. A loving note stated that every week on this night a dinner would arrive. As I tasted the goodness of this delicious meal, not only was my body fed, but my spirit also. I realized I am not alone and the Lord does love me. I tasted again of the sweet peace

It seemed the year 1987 would never arrive. This was the year I would turn 18 and be able to serve in the Brazilian Air Force. When I could, I enlisted and dedicated myself entirely to serving my country.

After a Church leader challenged us to share the gospel, I decided to seek out someone who might be interested in the Church. After many frustrating attempts and feeling somewhat discouraged, I was reading the scriptures in my bunk when I noticed another serviceman kneeling in reverent prayer.

I decided to inquire about his religious affiliation. His response was like a ray of sunshine. He told me he had observed my lack of inhibition in praying at mealtime and before bed. He had always had the desire to pray but had never found the courage. Finally, he resolved to do it, even though he didn't know exactly what he would say in his prayer.

I asked him, "Would you like to learn how to say a prayer?" His response was a very definite yes. That night I taught him in essence the six missionary discussions and bore my testimony. The Spirit testified clearly to the two of us that it was all true.

The weeks passed, and he accepted my invitation to go to church. He

began hearing the discussions from the missionaries and participating in ward activities.

One day during lunch, after saying a prayer, he looked into my eyes and said, "I have decided. I want to be baptized." His words were like the



resounding of a cannon in my heart. I was surprised and happy, and he added to that when he said, "And I want you to baptize me." Then it was too much. Unable to contain my tears, I embraced him, and he said to me, "Thank you, my friend."

With the passing of time, we sent in our missionary applications, and he actually ended up leaving on a mission before I did. Today we are far from one another, but we have a strong link that will unite us beyond this mortal life. He married in the temple and has a beautiful family.

I am thankful for the inspired leader who challenged me to share the gospel with those around me and to be an example for others. ■

Dalnei de Assunção de Castro is a member of the Santa Clara Branch, São José Brazil Stake.

He has promised us. I was grateful for these dear secret angels who honored their baptismal covenants “to mourn with those that mourn” and “comfort those that stand in need of comfort” (Mosiah 18:9). I knew that through the ministering of these “earthly angels” I would find the strength to make it through each day.

It has now been more than three years since we found that first dinner. Every Mutual night since then we have received a wonderful meal, always left anonymously on our front porch. Ward boundaries have changed, and people have moved in and out of our ward. But the meals continue to come. Often I have struggled with a particularly difficult day, forgetting it is our “Secret Angels Day.” And then the doorbell rings, and I find another delicious gift of love.

My disease continues to progress, and there are still many unanswered questions. But I know I am not alone. I have felt the peace that comes from trusting the Lord and accepting His will. I know that many of the trials we encounter in this life are for our good and help turn our weaknesses into strengths. I also know that we do not have to bear our trials alone. The Lord always answers our prayers, but often the answers come through those who are willing to serve and be His “secret angels.” ■

Mary Bartschi is a member of the Continental Ranch Ward, Tucson Arizona North Stake.

What about Agabus?

By Eric Hendershot

While serving a mission in England, one morning I read Acts 11:28, which briefly mentions a prophet named Agabus who prophesied of a famine that eventually came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. At the time I didn’t give the seemingly insignificant verse much thought.

Two days later my district leader, Elder Gallafent, telephoned and said he wanted to do a companion exchange the next day. The next morning my companion and I took a bus to Southampton, where we met Elder Gallafent and his companion, Elder Langston. I set out contacting people door-to-door with Elder Langston while the other two drove back to Winchester.

Our morning had been uneventful until we knocked on a certain door just before lunch. The woman who answered the door was a neighbor visiting from the house next door. I soon learned that the woman who lived there was in the living room within reach of my voice.

When I announced we were missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the woman in the living room yelled that she was of another faith and knew all about the “Mormons” and wasn’t interested in learning more. When I replied that everyone should be interested in a living prophet on the

earth, she cried, “That’s not so! There are no prophets on the earth! Jesus Christ was the last prophet.”

Then something strange happened. A question came to my mind: “What about Agabus?”

I immediately called out, “What about Agabus?” There was a long pause. Then the woman responded, “Who’s Agabus?”

“A prophet who lived after Christ and who prophesied of a famine that came to pass,” I said.

She asked me, “Where did you read that—in your Mormon Bible?”

“No,” I replied, “in the book of Acts, chapter 11, verse 28.”

“Show me,” came the skeptical voice. The neighbor let us enter, and Elder Langston and I made our way down a small hallway into the living room, where a woman in her 40s was seated on the sofa.

I opened to the scripture and handed her the Bible. After she finished reading, she didn’t know what to say. I told her of the living prophet on the earth at that time, President David O. McKay (1873–1970). I testified of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Spirit was so powerful that I knew she could feel it.

Elder Langston and I left two copies of the Book of Mormon—one for this woman and one for her neighbor. I walked away feeling like I was floating on air. I was sure she

would be baptized. Why else would I have remembered Agabus?

The following Sunday at church, I rushed up to Elder Gallafent and Elder Langston and asked, “Did you go back? What happened? Tell me!”

They told me they had gone to her home to give her the first discussion but were turned away. She returned the Book of Mormon we had given her.

I couldn’t believe it. I sat through church wondering why I would receive such a wonderful prompting and then have it result like this. I was terribly discouraged, but I tried to put it out of my mind.

The next Sunday as I walked into the church foyer, Elder Langston ran up to me with an ear-to-ear grin.

“Remember that woman we left the Book of Mormon with?” he asked.

“Of course,” I replied.


He then reminded me that we had left two copies of the Book of Mormon—one with the woman and one with her neighbor. The neighbor had never taken her copy home. So, without the knowledge of the woman of the house, her daughter had begun to read that copy and wanted to know more about the Church.

The woman eventually took the missionary discussions with her

daughter, and both were baptized.

As I look back more than 30 years and recall the question that came to me, “What about Agabus?” I am reminded of another scripture: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). I am grateful that as a missionary I was able to have the Spirit bring to my remembrance the significance of Agabus. The Holy Ghost truly was my teacher that day. ■

Eric Hendershot is a member of the Green Valley First Ward, St. George Utah Green Valley Stake.



Show me,” came the skeptical voice. I opened to the scripture. After she finished reading, she didn’t know what to say.

Death Is a New Beginning

By Claudia Yolanda Ortíz Herrera

My parents were baptized on 18 August 1978. I was 5 years old; my sister, Noelia, was just 5 months old; and my brother, Luis, was born 11 years later. We were sealed in the Guatemala City Guatemala Temple in June 1988. I can still remember the beautiful scene: we were dressed in white, uniting our family into eternity.

We were a stable, united, and active family, and our lives seemed perfect. But even when we stay close to the commandments, have testimonies of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and Their work, and aspire to achieve exaltation, adversity will come.

In January 1999 my father had a serious accident and was admitted to intensive care, where he was able to breathe only with the help of a respirator. He suffered hematomas, which caused swelling of the brain.

When the rest of the family learned of his condition, we immediately went to the hospital. As a physician, I knew the outlook was dim. Nevertheless, we fasted, prayed, and trusted in our Heavenly Father to restore my father so that soon, despite any aftereffects or the treatments he might need, he would come home again and be the wonderful guide and protector he had always been. As we fasted and prayed, I felt my faith grow stronger, and I anxiously waited for him to open his eyes and start to recover.

Visits from our inspired bishop were a constant strength during this trial. He gave my father a priesthood blessing, and we waited for a change.



The bishop gave us a copy of “Tragedy or Destiny” and urged us to ask God what plans He had for my father.

Since my father did not improve, we began to wonder if our pleadings were really in accordance with Heavenly Father’s will. One night the bishop, after giving us blessings, talked to us about the plan of salvation and told us that when someone is blessed to recover, he or she will live if not appointed unto death (see D&C 42:48). He also gave us a copy of “Tragedy or Destiny” (see *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1966, 178–80, 210–17), a talk by President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985). The bishop urged us to ask God what plans He had. After we said good-bye to the bishop, I decided with much sorrow to follow his counsel. I was

able to learn that my father’s time on earth had come to an end.

Complications arose, and my father’s condition deteriorated even more. His natural strength abated before our eyes, and we knew that this was a confirmation of what was going to happen. I worried that my pain at losing him would become so great I would lose my faith and vision and not be able to endure. But that isn’t what happened.

Never before had the wonderful plan of happiness had the meaning it now had in my life. I was able to feel a peace that tempered my emotions. It opened my eyes and mind and enabled me to understand to a limited extent the greatness, glory, and majesty of life and the importance of this brief time on earth.

The time came to tell my father, “Until we meet again.” Nine days after the accident, he died. I was with him as he reached the end of his earthly existence, but now I had a different understanding. I was able to feel how sweetly our Heavenly Father loves us and how He prepares the necessary opportunities for us to become as He is.

My confidence is complete that the day will come, if we endure to the end, when through the Atonement and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we will rise clothed in glory, immortality, and eternal life. Death is just a new beginning. ■

Claudia Yolanda Ortíz Herrera is a member of the Victorias Ward, Guatemala City Guatemala Las Victorias Stake.

Feeling the Love of the Lord through Generosity

Prayerfully select and read from this message the scriptures and teachings that meet the needs of the sisters you visit. Share your experiences and testimony. Invite those you teach to do the same.

How Have You Experienced the Generosity of the Lord?

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Among the perfect attributes of our living God, one that is and will be a great blessing to us, is His generosity. Important though it is, this quality is one that tends to be less noted.

“God’s generosity is associated with divine gladness, such as is evoked when His children keep His commandments. He is quick to bless and is delighted to honor the faithful (see D&C 76:5). God’s generosity is expressed also in His long-suffering, His being always ready to respond when His children are inclined to ‘feel after Him’ (see Acts 17:27; D&C 112:13)” (*If Thou Endure It Well* [1996], 39).

President John Taylor (1808–87):

“If we have life, or health, or possessions; if we have children, and friends and homes, if we have the light of truth, the blessings of the everlasting gospel, the revelations of God, the holy priesthood, with all its blessings

and government and rule, all these and every true enjoyment that we possess come from God. We do not always realize this, but it is nevertheless true that to God we are indebted for every good and perfect gift” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* [2001], 175).

How Can You Express Generosity?

2 Corinthians 9:7: “According as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

Bonnie D. Parkin, Relief Society general president: “When Joseph Smith organized the Relief Society, he called us to ‘relieve the poor’ and ‘to save souls’ [*History of the Church*, 5:25]. When we fulfill this mandate, we are living welfare. . . . The Lord’s Storehouse—where ‘there is enough and to spare’—is [symbolically] what the Lord has placed in each of us (D&C 104:17). It is one woman making a difference for another. It is one sister offering to listen or talk with a sister who may be lonely. It is a sister developing a close friendship with the sister she visit teaches. It is you and me with our strengths, our skills, and our talents blessing the life of another.

“We choose what we give to the Lord’s Storehouse from what He has given us. Sisters, do you see the abundance we have to draw upon? What gifts have you been given that you can bring to the Lord’s Storehouse?” (“Welfare, the Crowning Principle of a Christian Life,” BYU Women’s Conference, 1 May 2003, 3).

President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988), First Counselor in the First Presidency: “Be generous in your giving, that you yourselves may grow. Don’t give just for the benefit of the poor, but give for your own welfare. Give enough so that you can give yourself into the kingdom of God through consecrating of your means and your time. Pay an honest tithing and a generous fast offering if you want the blessings of heaven. I promise every one of you who will do it that you will increase your own prosperity, both spiritually and temporally. The Lord will reward you according to your deeds” (“The Blessing of the Fast,” *Tambuli*, Dec. 1982, 4; see *Ensign*, July 1982, 4). ■

My Journal, A Vital Record

Is keeping a journal worth it? Of course—especially when you consider that your posterity will seek information about you whether you provide it or not! Writing it yourself helps ensure accuracy and allows you to emphasize what *you* think is most important. It is also helpful to have a careful record on hand when your own memory begins to fade.

Personally, I prefer to write by hand in acid-free, hardcover, bound journals. I think handwritten entries allow future generations a special glimpse into your personality. If you keep your journal on computer, I

suggest you periodically print it and keep the hard copy somewhere safe. A journal stored in a nonretrievable format is as bad as no journal at all.

Over the years I have enhanced my journal writing by keeping in mind two simple guidelines:

Be complete. In addition to sharing thoughts and feelings, your journal is a record of your life's events. For future reference, be sure to include complete information: names (first and last), dates (including the year), and places (city, state, or other information applicable to your country). Don't assume that people and events you know intimately will be familiar to your future readers. It may seem tedious at first to add these details, but future readers will be grateful for your efforts.

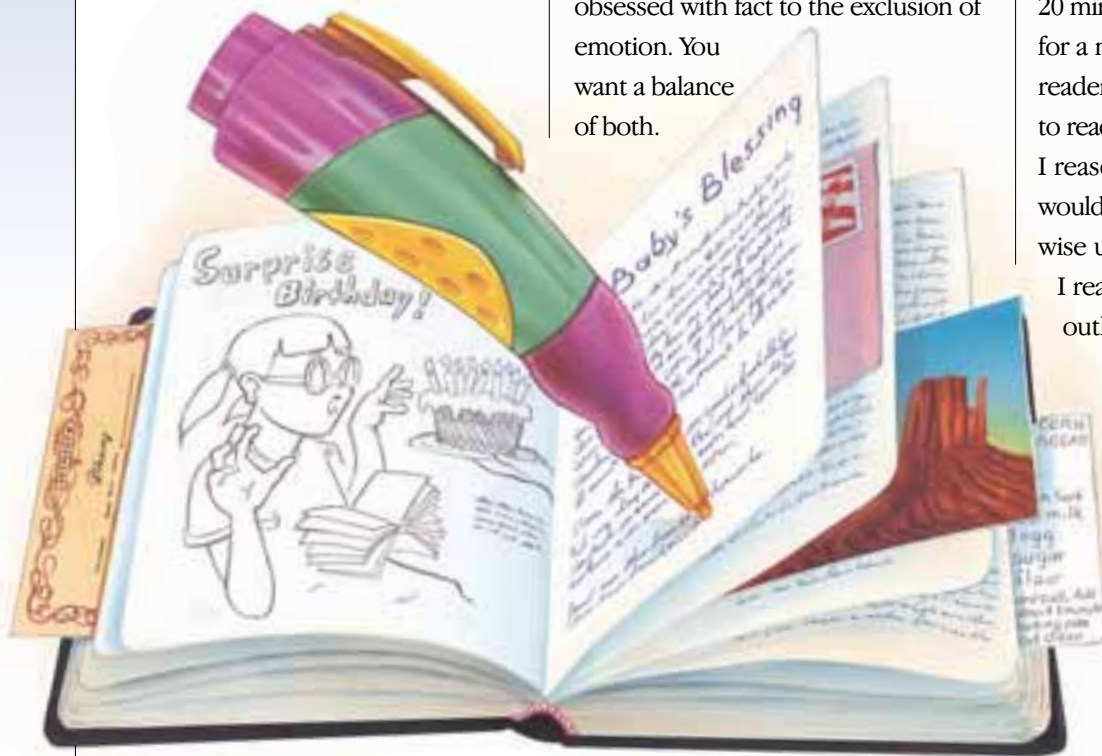
Vary your entries. Don't become obsessed with fact to the exclusion of emotion. You want a balance of both.

In addition to narrative entries, my journal contains a variety of entries, from lists of people who attended events like my children's baby blessings to postcards received from friends. I have included favorite scriptures as well as synopses of ward and stake meetings. I have also drawn pictures in my journal and have even included some of my favorite recipes.

*Preston Draper, Norman Fourth Ward,
Norman Oklahoma Stake*

Bonding with Baby

When I had my first baby, I quickly realized that breast-feeding can consume a great deal of time—sometimes 20 minutes or more every two hours for a newborn. Since I am an avid reader, I thought I would use this time to read six volumes of Church history. I reasoned that Heavenly Father would be pleased with my seemingly wise use of time. However, one day I read a booklet that changed my outlook. Prepared for adoptive parents, it explained how they could bond with their new infants. Though babies do not understand speech, the booklet pointed out, they respond to such stimuli as touch, eye contact, and sound. Because eating is so pleasurable for them, a mother can effectively communicate





A Hymn and a Scripture

My husband and I noticed that during sacrament meeting our children were not singing the hymns with much enthusiasm. We decided they might not be singing them because they did not know them well. A simple solution came to mind. Why not select hymns and accompanying scriptures to use for family home evening and before morning and evening prayers?

Using a simple assignment chart, we

rotate the song and scripture selections among family members. We each have a turn to choose what we feel will best strengthen our family. We then introduce the upcoming week's scripture and hymn at family home evening and subsequently post the scripture in a prominent place. Before morning and

evening prayers, we

sing the hymn and recite the scripture. By the next family home evening, we usually have both memorized and reward those who do with a small treat. Every few months, we also play a simple review game.

I love to hear my four-year-old sing "Redeemer of Israel" as he plays around the house and to hear all five of my children recite the scriptures by heart. We hope that as our children grow up and encounter difficult situations, they will draw upon the beautiful messages found in our hymns and scriptures.

Valerie Smith, Centerville Ward, Dayton Ohio Stake



her love while feeding. I realized that I might use some of this time caressing my baby's hair, stroking little arms and hands, or singing softly. Babies don't always stay awake during their feedings. But I learned that when they do, it's important to use this precious time with my child to communicate love.

Penny D. Brown, Cottonwood 13th Ward, Salt Lake Cottonwood Stake

Why Learn a Second Language?

Since the Church has more members living outside the United States than within, those who are multilingual and knowledgeable about other cultures can increasingly serve their brothers and sisters worldwide. In view, then, of the spiritual, educational, social, and professional advantages of familiarity with languages and cultures, what can we do to enhance our own abilities in these areas?

1. Learn any foreign languages that your parents or grandparents speak. Share the good and uplifting aspects of their cultural heritage so its strengths can be part of your life too.

2. Share your native culture if you grew up in another country. Of course you will want your family to be fully participating citizens of the country where you now live. But teach them the language and culture

of your heritage, particularly those values that will strengthen them and their future families.

3. Encourage children to learn a second language. Though you can study a language at any time, language learning comes most easily and naturally to young children. Learning another language will likely help them to understand their own language better.

4. Practice any foreign language you learned on a mission or in school. For personal study, consider using foreign-language scriptures on occasion; you may also choose to offer personal prayers in your second language. A subscription to the *Liabona*, the Church's international

magazine, can also be helpful. Seek a variety of opportunities to practice.

5. Learn English as a second language. If English is not your native language, consider learning it also. In addition to increased job opportunities, you will be blessed to study modern scriptures in their original language and to understand English-speaking Church leaders who don't speak the language of every country where the gospel has spread.

If learning another language seems daunting, remember that you can have the Holy Ghost to help you in fulfilling righteous desires to serve your brothers and sisters.

Bruce B. Clark, Cherry Hills Second Ward, Orem Utah Cherry Hills Stake

Manhattan Temple Dedication Generates Worldwide Interest

After a month-long open house, President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated the Manhattan New York Temple in four sessions on 13 June 2004. Sixteen meetinghouses received live broadcasts of the dedication, interpreted in 10 languages.

The opening of the temple caused an international media stir, with a variety of media outlets in the United States and throughout the world featuring not only the new temple, but also explaining some of the Church's history, beliefs, and reasons for the temple. More than 53,000 people of various faiths attended the open house of the temple, located across from the Lincoln Center and one block west of Central Park.

A jubilee produced by Church members and held at famed Radio City Music Hall also received attention. President Hinckley attended and spoke at the event, which boasted the largest cast to



An artist's rendition shows the Manhattan New York Temple with a new façade and a steeple, new features that were still under construction as of press time.

ever perform on that stage—more than 2,400 young Latter-day Saints. The performance included song, dance, and videotaped segments, and it showcased the talents of many Latter-day Saints who earn their living performing, directing, or producing shows on Broadway.

During the May open house, visitors commented on the sense of peace they felt while touring the newly remodeled building. While the temple is soundproof—

keeping out the bustling noise of a city that never sleeps—tour guides had the opportunity to explain the peace that comes from being in the house of the Lord.

In his dedicatory prayer, President Hinckley said, "May this temple be a place of quiet refuge in the midst of this great and noisy metropolis. May

all who enter its portals feel they have stepped from the world into a place of Thy divine presence."

The temple will serve 42,000 members, who until now have had to travel to

Boston, Massachusetts, or Washington, D.C., to attend the temple.

Since the 1970s the Church has used the building as an office and meetinghouse. Now, the first, second, fifth, and sixth floors comprise the temple's 20,630 square feet (1,920 sq m). The floors sandwich a meeting hall, gym, and offices. It is one of only two Latter-day Saint temples that are not freestanding; the other is the Hong Kong China Temple.

At the time of the dedication, the exterior of the Manhattan New York Temple looked much like another office building to passersby, but the Church later received clearance to add a spire topped with a golden angel Moroni, which was added in June. A new facing is being added to the south and west sides of the building. ■

President Hinckley Receives Presidential Medal of Freedom

President Gordon B. Hinckley spent his 94th birthday in Washington, D.C., where U.S. President George W. Bush awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award in the United States.

In his remarks on 23 June 2004, President Bush said, "Millions of Americans reserve a special respect for Gordon B. Hinckley, who still works every day as President of the Mormon Church, and who, on this very day, turns 94 years old.

"Mr. Hinckley is the grandson of Mormon pioneers and has given devoted service to his church since 1935. He's always shown the heart of a servant and the gifts of a leader. Through his discipline and faithfulness, he has proven a worthy successor to the many fine leaders before him. His church has given him its highest position of trust, and today this wise and patriotic man receives his country's highest civil honor."

President Hinckley expressed his appreciation



Young members of the Church perform in Radio City Music Hall before the dedication of the Manhattan New York Temple.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHAUN STAHL/COURTESY OF CHURCH NEWS



President Gordon B. Hinckley greets U.S. President George W. Bush after receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

before receiving the award. He said, "I am profoundly grateful. In a larger sense, it recognizes and honors the Church, which has given me so many opportunities and whose interests I have tried to serve.

"To the Church, to my associates, and to our people

everywhere, I extend my gratitude and with each of you share the honor of this recognition."

President Hinckley was one of 13 recipients. Another was Pope John Paul II, who received his medal when President Bush visited the Vatican a few weeks earlier.

The official written citation with the award states, "As the president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and throughout his nearly 70 years in Church leadership, Gordon B. Hinckley has inspired millions and has led efforts to improve humanitarian aid, disaster relief, and education funding across the globe.

"His tireless efforts to spread the word of God and to promote good will has strengthened his faith, his community, and our nation. The United States honors Gordon B. Hinckley for his devoted service to his church and to his fellowman."

All five of President Hinckley's children were present at the ceremony. ■

The new edition will be a hardcover version with design changes introduced to make the book easier to read and understand for an audience outside of the Latter-day Saint culture. It will not include the cross-references, index, and footnotes used in the editions available in Church distribution centers. The two-column format will be replaced by a single column, intended to make the book easier to read.

One addition to the book includes a seven-page Reference Guide to help orient the reader who may not be familiar with the Church or its teachings. It will outline key events, ideas, and people. The book will be priced at U.S. \$24.95.

"The Mormon faith has become one of the largest in America," said Doubleday Religion Division Vice President Michelle Rapkin. "We're proud to be the first publisher to bring this vitally important work to bookstores across the country."

Because the Latter-day Saint faith is growing so rapidly, many people are interested in reading the book, Ms. Rapkin told the *Salt Lake Tribune*. But because most general-interest bookstores don't carry the Church's version, copies of the book aren't always easy to find.

Since its initial printing in English in 1830, the Book of Mormon has been translated into 72 languages, beginning with Danish in 1851. Selections of it have been printed in an additional 32 languages. ■

Major Trade Publisher to Produce First Commercial Book of Mormon

For the 174 years that the Book of Mormon has been in publication, the world has received it through the efforts of members and missionaries who have distributed it. But now a new option has come along.

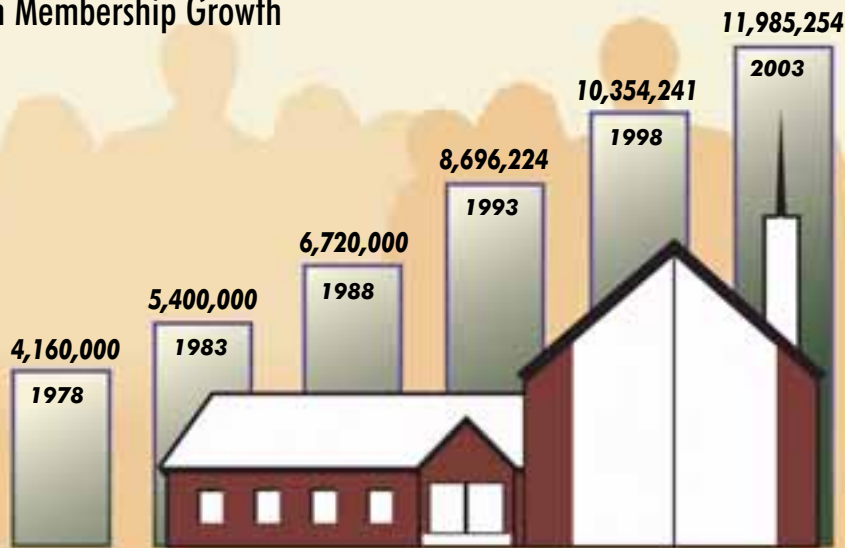
In November, Doubleday, a publishing firm based in New York, will become the first major trade publisher to produce an official, commercial edition of the book. Until now, all other official distribution has been through the Church.

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said that the First Presidency had authorized the new publication, feeling this would allow the sacred volume to be more readily obtained by the general public at such places as airport bookstores and through major popular retail outlets and their Web sites. The availability of the Book of Mormon in bookstores is not expected to detract from the efforts of full-time and member missionaries.

Since Doubleday approached the Church about the idea more than a year ago, they have been working with the Church to make sure the text remains true to the authorized edition already in use by Church members.

"The new edition uses the authorized text, so buying new scriptures is not necessary," Elder Eyring said. "However, many members may feel that this new edition would be an ideal gift for friends who are not members of the Church." ■

Church Membership Growth



Source: Statistical Reports of the Church

Projected growth rates estimate that Church membership topped 12 million early in 2004.

Church Membership Surpasses 12 Million Worldwide in Early 2004

Based on growth rates, worldwide membership in the Church likely topped the 12 million mark earlier this year. As of 31 December 2003, members of the Church numbered 11,985,254 worldwide, up 263,706 from the year before.

Worldwide, Church membership has nearly tripled during the past 25 years. Members numbered 4,160,000 on 31 December 1978.

A 2004 report on 215 U.S. churches lists the Church as the fifth largest in the United States with 5.4 million (based

on 2002 data). The National Council of Churches' *2004 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* also reports that the Church has the highest rate of growth (1.88 percent per year in the U.S.) among the 15 largest U.S. churches. ■

their first three weeks of training in the Provo MTC, then spend the remaining five and a half weeks in the Dominican Republic MTC if they are going to serve in the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico, the Peru MTC if they are going to serve in Peru or Bolivia, or the Spain MTC if they are going to serve in Spain or the Canary Islands.

The remaining 10 MTCs principally train missionaries who live in the area around that MTC. These MTCs are located in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, the Philippines, and South Africa. Almost all missionaries now attend at least one of the MTCs for training prior to serving their missions. All of the MTCs also serve missionaries from their areas—for example, missionaries from South America may attend the Brazil MTC if there is not an MTC in the area where they will be serving.

No matter which MTC a missionary attends, all will have the opportunity to reach goals of learning and cherishing the doctrines of the gospel and developing Christlike attributes; learning to teach with power to help others have faith in Christ, repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure to the end; and seeking the gift of tongues and becoming functional in the mission language, according to *Guidelines for MTC Presidents*.

As of 31 December 2003, 56,237 full-time missionaries were serving around the world. ■

More Full-time Missionaries Attending International Missionary Training Centers

By Patricia Selman, Church Magazines

As Missionary Training Centers (MTCs) have been built around the world, more and more missionaries from the United States and Canada are being sent directly to the MTC in the country where they have been called, or splitting their time between the Provo MTC and one of the 16 international MTCs.

Because of the increasing

number of missionaries being sent to international MTCs, there is now space available for the senior missionaries at the Provo MTC. In May 2004, the Senior Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, was torn down, and the land was returned to Brigham Young University for future development.

The first MTC outside of Utah was built in 1977 in São

Paulo, Brazil, and it remains the largest international MTC. Today missionaries from the United States and Canada receive training in the Brazil MTC if they are going to serve in Brazil, in the England MTC if they are going to serve their mission in the United Kingdom, and in the Ghana MTC if they are going to serve in Ghana.

Other missionaries receive



Serving in the Church is part of the Church's ever-expanding Web site at www.lds.org.

Church's Online Presence Continues to Grow

Information on serving in the Church and new MP3 audio files of Church materials have been added to the Church's Web site at www.lds.org. Also available is a new Church-affiliated Web site that offers information on Temple Square.

Serving in the Church Made Easier with New Site

The Church has launched Serving in the Church, a new section of www.lds.org designed to strengthen individuals and families by helping priesthood and auxiliary leaders fulfill their callings. The site, currently available in English, was launched on 9 June 2004.

Members newly called to positions in all organizations of the Church can turn to the Web site to better understand their new responsibilities and the purposes behind them. The Web site has introductions to and descriptions of the Melchizedek Priesthood,

Aaronic Priesthood/Young Men, Young Women, Relief Society, Primary, and Sunday School organizations of the Church. It also has a Military Relations link for those who are currently or will be serving in the military and those who preside over them.

Other links found on the site include addresses by Church leaders recently given at auxiliary open houses in Salt Lake City, links to the history of each organization, and messages from auxiliary presidents.

Serving in the Church joins other recently launched sections of www.lds.org, including the Church Music site and the Home and Family site.

Church Site Now Includes Audio Files

Thanks to the new Church Publications in Compressed Audio Format site, members can now listen to the Church magazines during lunch, scriptures and recent general

conference addresses on the bus, or the soundtrack to a Church movie almost anywhere and anytime.

New downloadable MP3 files, found at www.lds.org/mp3/newarchive, include the scriptures, general conference addresses, study materials, Church magazines, Relief Society and priesthood manuals, and soundtracks to Church movies and special events. New content will be added frequently. Users can download the MP3 files and listen to the recordings on their personal computer, transfer the files to a portable MP3 player, or record them onto a CD. Users can register on the site to receive e-mail notifications when new content has been added.

Members have listened to the audio files while commuting, doing housework, traveling, and exercising. Many users have commented that listening to the scriptures helps them to better comprehend and retain what they study as they read along. Others are using the files to study English, to supplement their family scripture reading for young children who have a hard time reading, and for family home evenings.

Visit Temple Square Online with New Site

For those who want to visit Temple Square or just learn more about it, a new Web site has been launched that provides details about the many buildings, events, services, and attractions found on or around the 10 acres (4 ha) surrounding the Salt Lake Temple.

The easy-to-navigate site, located at www.visittemple-square.com, was officially launched in June by Temple Square Hospitality, an entity owned by the Church.

A small description about each location on a map is provided when clicked on. The locations shown include the temple, the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the Church Office Building, and Brigham Young Historical Park.

Pull-down menus provide information on events, services, dining, and attractions. Also included are links to sites that provide tourist information for surrounding areas. ■

In the News

Salt Lake Redevelopment Moving Ahead

The Church has completed the purchase of the Triad Center, a mixed-use office and retail complex set on 10 acres (4 ha) in downtown Salt Lake City. This will allow the Church to immediately move forward with the educational component of its downtown Salt Lake City redevelopment project.

Much of the 500,000 square feet (46,000 sq m) of retail and office space at the Triad Center, located between North and South Temple Streets three blocks west of Temple Square, will be refitted and partially filled by LDS Business College and the Salt Lake campus extension of Brigham Young University, which are being relocated here.

The Church initially announced that the two schools would be housed in new buildings to be built in a parking lot east of the Triad Center, which was formerly used as the 2002 Olympics Medals Plaza. Using the existing buildings will not only be more cost-effective than new construction, but will allow the campuses to open sooner, according to Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop. The redesign phase for the Triad Center will wrap up within the next few months, and renovation will continue throughout 2005. The opening academic year for the two schools could be as soon as 2006.

About 5,000 students are expected to attend classes on the new campus initially.

The Triad Center, which was originally constructed in 1984, incorporates an entire city block. Its property contains three office towers, two parking structures, grassy areas, and the Devereaux House, a historic mansion. Portions of the block not purchased by the Church are already owned by Church-affiliated businesses, including the building that houses KSL-TV and radio stations owned by Bonneville Communications and a surface parking lot owned by a commercial real estate company affiliated with the Church.

Missionary Recovering from Fall in Australia

A missionary who fell 230 feet (70 m) from a cliff in an Australian national park attracted worldwide attention, first during an effort by

search and rescue teams to locate him, then by an amazing set of events that contributed to what appears to be a full recovery.

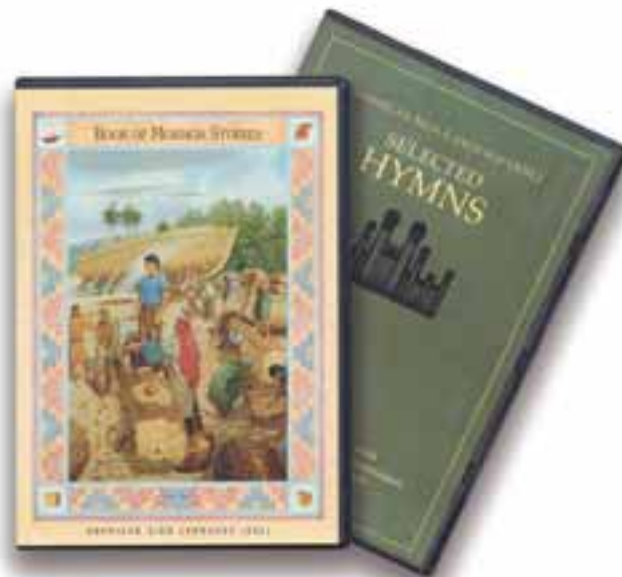
Elder Matthew Weirich was due to complete his mission and return to his home in Fredericksburg, Texas, in the United States on 16 August 2004. But as he was hiking with fellow missionaries near the Grand Canyon Lookout in Morton National Park on 23 June, another elder lost a shoe. Elder Weirich went to look for it, but never returned.

Amazingly, Elder Weirich survived the 230-foot (70-m) fall. Authorities believe that a cluster of trees and ground foliage broke the fall of the former BYU student and track team member. The missionary's only injuries were small fractures above his eyebrow and in his nose, a swollen tongue, and a few scratches. He spent the night on the canyon floor in near-freezing temperatures, which doctors think may have helped reduce any swelling.

Choir Celebrates Anniversary with Gala Concert

In commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's weekly radio broadcast, a special gala concert was held with the Orchestra at Temple Square on 17 July 2004 in the Conference Center.

Charles Osgood, the acclaimed CBS News correspondent, was the featured guest at the concert. Last July he helped the choir kick off their yearlong festivities celebrating the anniversary of *Music and the Spoken Word*



American Sign Language versions of Book of Mormon Stories and Selected Hymns have recently been released on DVD.

in the Lincoln Center in New York City.

Craig Jessop, music director of the choir, said of Mr. Osgood, "He is a dear friend of the choir, and his presence on the concert and the anniversary broadcast will be the icing on the cake for these gala festivities."

Multimedia interludes portraying the history of the choir were included in the concert. The actual anniversary broadcast of *Music and the Spoken Word* took place the next day, 18 July 2004. It was the program's 3,909th broadcast. The choir was recently inducted into the National Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame for having the longest continuous weekly network radio program in the world.

Church Releases American Sign Language DVDs

Those who use American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary language may now be able to better understand stories from the Book of Mormon

and appreciate Church hymns, thanks to the introduction of two new ASL products on DVD: *Book of Mormon Stories* and *Selected Hymns*.

Book of Mormon Stories on DVD will "help deaf individuals to understand the Book of Mormon better," says Doug Hind, Special Curriculum Specialist in the Curriculum Department. In addition to the visual stories, the DVD includes a glossary of English words translated into ASL.

Members who are hearing-impaired sometimes struggle to find personal meaning in the music played in Church meetings. Because hymns are often hard to translate during meetings, a team was put together to translate 127 hymns for the *Selected Hymns* DVD.

"Music plays a big part in our lives, and we have to realize people who are totally deaf don't have the same enjoyment of music," says Brother Hind. "This translation [helps make the music]

more meaningful to them.”

Missionaries can also use the two DVDs for teaching

purposes when they come across people who are deaf, Brother Hind said. ■

Policies and Announcements

The First Presidency has sent the following letter, dated 6 May 2004, to priesthood leaders.

Stake Conference Broadcasts

In order to give members of the Church greater access to the teachings of Church leaders, the following adjustments in stake conferences have now been approved:

At one stake conference each year, the stake president will continue to preside as at present and will plan the conference with his counselors according to established guidelines. It will be at this conference that the sustaining of general and local authorities should occur.

The other stake conference will alternate from year to year between two formats: one where a General Authority or Area Authority Seventy will preside, and one where the stake president will preside with a satellite broadcast incorporated into the Sunday

general session. The broadcast will include instruction by members of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and other General Authorities.

Some stake conference dates will be adjusted to enable groups of stakes to receive the broadcast on the same weekend. Members will attend in their own stake centers or in other meetinghouses equipped with a receiver. The broadcast will begin at a designated time, providing each congregation with about 15 minutes for an opening hymn, an invocation, and local Church business. Each congregation will have a closing hymn and a benediction after the conclusion of the broadcast. Other sessions of the conference will be conducted by the stake presidency.

Dates and details for these broadcasts will be sent to each stake well in advance of the conference, beginning with a few during 2004. ■

Comment

Conference Photos

I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the photos in the May *Ensign*. Nearly every photograph is a mini-sermon. They are a delight.

*Elsie Thackeray,
Etna Ward,
Medford Oregon Stake*

Seeing beyond Single

I would like to thank the author of “Seeing beyond

Single” (June 2004) for his words. It was wonderful to hear his perspective and to know that I am not alone! Thank you.

*Jill Hunter,
Wasatch Second Ward,
Salt Lake Wasatch Stake*

Kudos to Chris Brough. His article “Seeing beyond Single” is the best article about single members I

have ever read in the *Ensign*. Every point he made was right on the nose. I hope many bishops and others who work with singles will refer to it often. Thank you for printing this article.

*Jill Laing,
Madison Ward,
Phoenix Arizona East Stake*

Many Hands

First I noticed the Savior’s hand on page 61 of the June 2004 *Ensign* in the Visiting Teaching Message. Then throughout the *Ensign* I found other hands on almost every page. I found loving hands, missionary hands, working hands, helping hands, reverent hands, teaching hands, prophets’ hands, friendly hands, humble hands, clean hands, tired hands, and

worried hands. We are truly instruments in the hand of the Lord.

*Cheryl G. Brown,
Payson First Ward,
Payson Utah Mountain View Stake*

Correction

A subscription to the *Ensign* may be obtained in the United States and Canada online at ldscatalog.com or by phone at 1-800-537-5971. Subscriptions are also available at any Church distribution center or by sending a check or money order for U.S. \$10 (\$16 Canadian) made out to “CPB” to Distribution Services, P.O. Box 26368, Salt Lake City, UT 84126-0368, USA. The subscription cost was reported incorrectly in the July *Ensign*. ■

Call for Articles

Did the Church magazines help introduce you to the gospel or bring you back into activity? Did a single article make a difference, or was it the regular influence of the magazines in your home?

Please send us your story by 15 October 2004 to *Ensign* Editorial, 24th Floor, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA,

or to cur-editorial-ensign@ldschurch.org. Clearly mark your submission “Church Magazines,” and at the top of your submission write your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, ward, and stake (or branch and district).

While we cannot acknowledge receipt of individual responses, authors whose submissions are selected for publication will be notified. If you would like your manuscript returned, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope and allow up to a year. ■



MAKING THE MOST OF THIS ISSUE

S E P T E M B E R 2 0 0 4



Menlove, Primary general president, shares encouraging counsel in “Called to Serve,” page 24.

- “In our spiritual lives, our growth is determined by how we follow the

Son—the Son

of God—and allow His light to be the controlling force,” writes Elder Lynn A.

Mickelsen of the Seventy in “Light and Growth,” page 7.

- “The scriptures are a veritable banquet of insights and divine counsel. Let us feast at the table often,” writes Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy in “Feast upon the Words of Christ,” page 42.

Retired, but Not Retiring

Retired? Find new life by sharing your talents in the mission field. See “Couple Missionaries: Going the Second Mile,” page 20.

Fighting Same-Sex Attraction

The challenges of Church members who struggle with same-sex attraction are not often understood. But the support of other members can help them master temptations and find joy in the gospel. See “Compassion for Those Who Struggle,” page 58.



Free to Change

Handcuffed, in the back seat of a police car, she determined to change her life. Could she do it? Read “Finding Freedom,” page 38.

Know Thy Neighbor

It can seem challenging to develop relationships with our neighbors of other faiths, but in this month’s “Questions and Answers” feature, page 63, members share simple ideas for reaching out.

Teaching Your Family

- Looking for ways to improve your family home evenings? See “Family Home Evening Suggestion Box,” page 52.

- Would you like your teaching to be more like the Savior’s? In the home or in the classroom, try asking the kinds of questions He asked. In “Teaching as the Savior Taught,” page 28, Elder Walter F. González of the Seventy explores three kinds of questions the Savior used.

- What do the Agabus, Parkinson’s disease, prayer in a military barrack, and the death of a father have in common? Each is part of a story illustrating a fundamental gospel principle. See Latter-day Saint Voices, page 66.

A Call to Grow, a Time to Feast

- Have you ever received a calling that seemed overwhelming? Sister Coleen K.



Home, Visiting Teachers

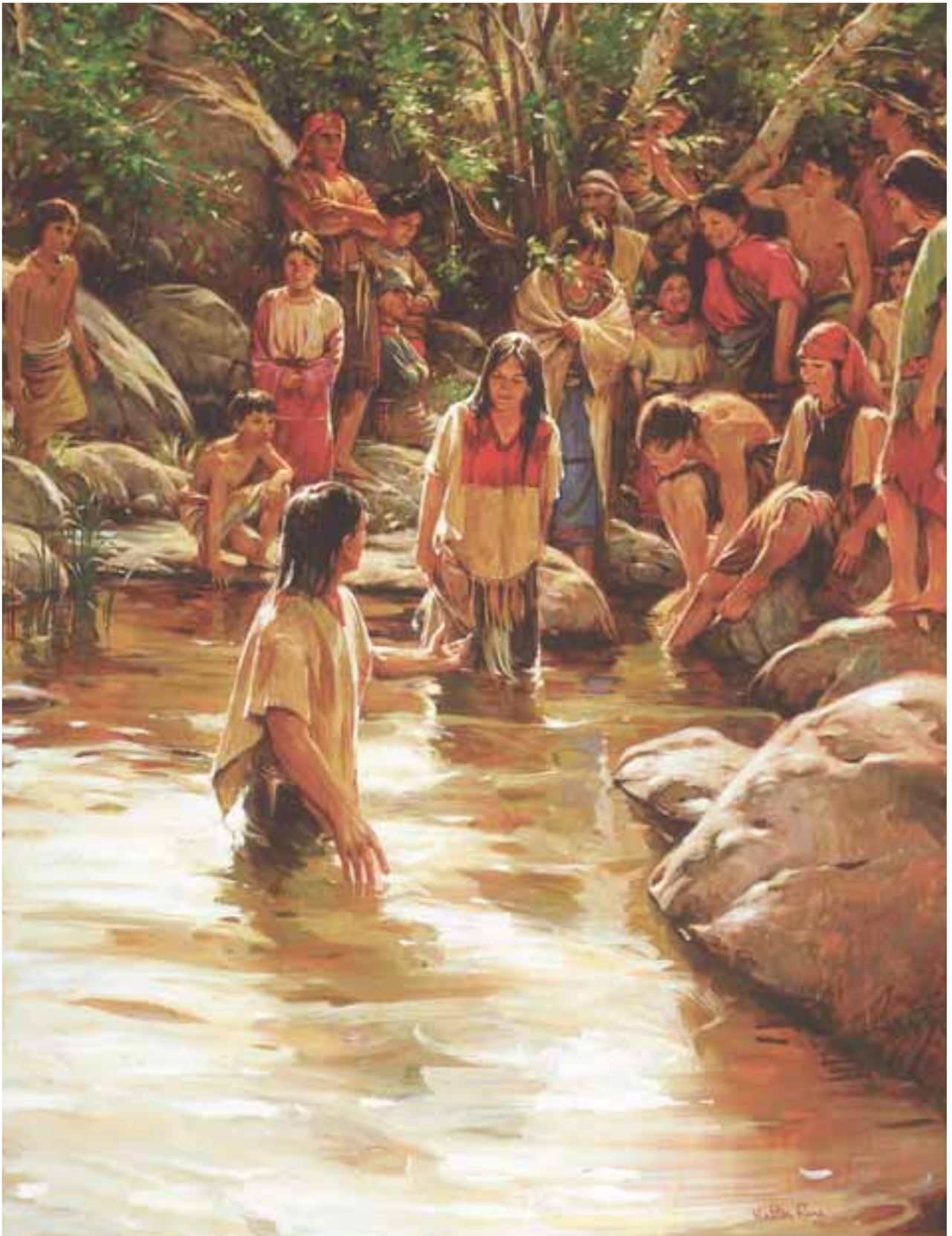
Find the monthly messages on pages 2 and 71.

Church Magazines for Your Scholar

Did you know you can buy a short-term subscription to the Church magazines for your college student? It could be the most important reading he or she will do this year, and the cost is only a fraction of the price of many textbooks. To order a nine-month subscription to the *Ensign* or *New Era*, call 1-800-537-5971 in the United States or Canada. Or you can order a full one-year subscription for your student online at www.lds.org; click on Order Church Materials, then Magazine Subscriptions. By entering an address change for your student two months before the end of the school year, you can reroute the magazine to the summer address.

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FROM BY THE HAND OF MORMON. © WALTER RANE. MAY NOT BE COPIED

Come into the Fold of God, by Walter Rane

Upon learning about baptism, the people of Alma “exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts. . . . And they were in number about two hundred and four souls; yea, and they were baptized in the waters of Mormon” (Mosiab 18:11, 16).



“For I [Alma the Younger] went about with the sons of Mosiah, seeking to destroy the church of God; but behold, God sent his holy angel to stop us by the way.

“And behold, he spake unto us, as it were the voice of thunder, and the whole earth did tremble beneath our feet; and we all fell to the earth, for the fear of the Lord came upon us.

“But behold, the voice said unto me: Arise. And I arose and stood up, and beheld the angel.

“And he said unto me: If thou wilt of thyself be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God” (Alma 36:6–9).